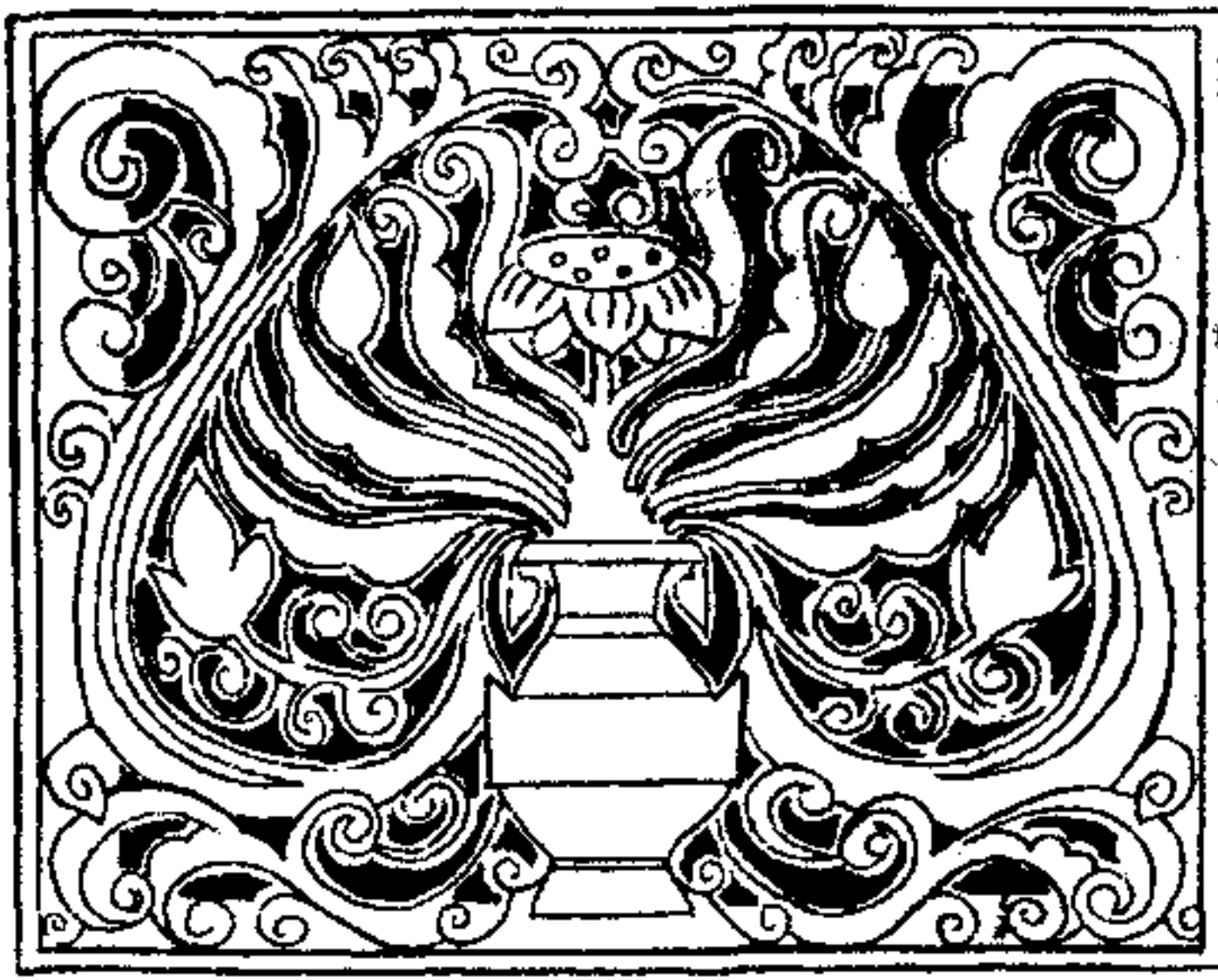




PRABUDDHA BHARATA

A Monthly Journal of the
Ramakrishna Order
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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JANUARY 1997

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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 102

JANUARY 1997

No. 1

The Glory of Sri Ramakrishna

श्रीरामकृष्ण-महिमा-स्तोत्रम्।

SWAMI GARGANANDA

हे दीनबन्धो करुणावतार
जयोऽस्तु ते वै कलिपापनाशिन्।
प्रेमाब्धिपूर्णं प्रणते प्रसन्न
प्रभो नमस्ते सततं नमस्ते ॥१॥

*He dīna-bandho karuṇāvatāra
jayo'stu te vai kalipāpa-nāśin;
Premābdhi-pūrṇa praṇate prasanna
prabho namaste satatam namaste. (1)*

O embodiment of divine grace, who are the friend of the helpless, and the destroyer of the unrighteousness of this materialistic age, victory to you. O Lord! who are an ocean full of divine love, who are pleased with those who take your refuge, my salutation to you, my constant salutation to you.

ज्ञानञ्च भक्तिं सुमतिञ्च शान्तिं
करोषि दानं शरणं पदाब्जे।
हे दुःखहारिन् हृदये निवासिन्
प्रभो नमस्ते सततं नमस्ते ॥२॥

*Jñānañca bhaktim sumatiñca śāntim
karoṣi dānam śaraṇam padābje;
He duḥkha-hārin hrdaye nivāsin
prabho namaste satatam namaste. (2)*

Kindly grant me right understanding, spiritual wisdom, devotion, and peace. I seek shelter at your feet. O Lord! who reside in our hearts, who are the dispeller of sufferings, my salutation to you, ever my salutation to you.

स्वमुक्तये जीवहिताय चैवं
 कुर्वन्ति ये वै तव कर्म भक्त्या।
 सिद्धिं लभन्ते कृपया ध्रुवं ते
 प्रभो नमस्ते सततं नमस्ते॥३॥

*Svamuktaye jīva-hitāya caivam
 kurvanti ye vai tava karma bhaktyā;
 Siddhim labhante kṛpayā dhruvam te
 prabho namaste satatam namaste. (3)*

They indeed who, for their own salvation and for the welfare of humanity, earnestly take part in your work, surely become fulfilled through your grace. O Lord! my salutation to you, ever my salutation to you.

असंख्य-जन्मार्जित-कर्महेतु-
 मायान्धकारो भवति प्रणष्टः।
 तवाङ्गदीप्त्या हृदि दिव्यदृष्ट्या
 प्रभो नमस्ते सततं नमस्ते ॥४॥

*Asaṅkhyā-janmārjita-karma-hetu-
 māyāndhakāro bhavati prañṣṭaḥ;
 Tavaṅga-dīptyā hṛdi divya-drṣṭyā
 prabho namaste satatam namaste. (4)*

Due to the effulgence of your form in our hearts and your divine glance, the darkness of delusion that has gathered in us as a result of our countless actions in past lives gets completely dispelled. O Lord! to you my salutation, to you ever my salutation.

योगासीनं चिदानन्दं सहास्य-वदनं स्थिरम्।
 भक्ताश्रयञ्च भक्तेष्टं वन्दे श्रीभक्तवत्सलम् ॥५॥

*Yogāsīnam cidānandam sahāsyā-vadanam sthiram;
 Bhaktyāśrayaṅca bhakteṣṭam vande śrī-bhaktavatsalam. (5)*

I bow down to the auspicious one (Sri Ramakrishna) who is seated undisturbed, absorbed in divine communion, and with a smiling face; who is (the personification of) Consciousness-Bliss (Brahman), who is the refuge and also the ideal of devotees, and who is compassionate towards them.

नमः श्रीरामकृष्णाय श्रेष्ठाय परमात्मने।
 अनन्तमहिमासिन्धु-सारदापतये नमः ॥६॥

*Namaḥ śrī-rāmakṛṣṇāya śreṣṭhāya paramātmāne;
 Ananta-mahimā-sindhu-sārādā-pataye namaḥ. (6)*

My salutation to Sri Ramakrishna who is the best and is the supreme Atman; my salutation to the ocean of divine glories, the consort of Sarada. ◻

Through Him They Flow Home

(Freely adapted from Swami Ramakrishnananda's 'Hymn to Swami Vivekananda')

'HIRANYAGARBHA'*

He knew all the life we know
As emptiness and shadow show,
But deep within his heart he came to know
Where the hearts of all must go—
To him my thoughts go; through him they flow home.

To one whose soul forever knew
The joy that comes to a few
Whose hearts are pure enough to feel
The shadow is unreal—
To him my thoughts go, through him they flow home.

All who have known him also have known
That, soul to soul, a spark has flown
Out of knowledge so divine
It made his own face shine;
To him my thoughts go, through him they flow home.

If a light shines in darkness,
Darkness hides;
But this was light from deep inside
Where all the darkness dies;
To him my thoughts go, through him they flow home.

Here on a hill in a house we know
On a day not long ago,
He showed that if your heart is true
The truth will shine in you;
To him my thoughts go, through him they flow home.

He closed his eyes for all to see
That he who cuts the shadow free
Becomes a light that shines and shines and shines
Through all eternity—
To him my thoughts go, through him they flow home.

* An 'anonymous' contribution from a friend in Southern California.—Ed.

To Our Readers

Our New Year Greetings to the *Prabuddha Bharata's* contributors, subscribers, readers, reviewers and advertisers, through whose support this journal is flourishing.

As mentioned in the last month's issue, this number is special, commemorating two centenaries—one of Swami Vivekananda's first return to India in 1897 after propagating Vedanta in the West, and the other of his founding the Ramakrishna Mission on 1st May that same year.

We are glad to say that, as for the special issues in January 1995 and 1996, so for this one too we have received good articles. We are glad to introduce you to the ideas of many new writers—only some six are known to most of you. Considering the occasion, we requested them to contribute an article or, if that was not possible, just a letter, but in either case giving it a personal and practical tinge—we wished to avoid 'heavy' philosophical material. So you will find in the following pages topics that are absorbing and touching.

The articles have been *broadly* classified as follows—first, those on Swamiji's return to India and the country's tumultuous response; next, on how Swamiji organized the Work; then, some articles on Vedanta, application of Swamiji's ideas, etc.; lastly, articles, letters, reminiscences ('How I came in touch with Sri Ramakrishna's teachings/Vedanta/Ramakrishna Mission', 'In what way have I gained', etc.).

We earnestly hope you will benefit from this issue. Further, we request you all to please participate in any way you can in the Centenary events planned, least of all by trying to sell or present the universal, non-dogmatic and life-giving Ramakrishna-Vivekananda-Vedanta publications to as many people as possible for you. For, as Swamiji has underscored, when more and more people absorb great ideas, a silent but sure change in our society is bound to come.

Swami Vivekananda, His Universal Love

In a letter to Shrimati Sarala Ghoshal, Editor of *Bharati*, dated 6th April 1897 Swami Vivekananda writes about an interesting belief held by girls in Japan. He writes: 'I heard in Japan that it was the belief of the girls of that country that their dolls would be animated if they were loved with all their heart. The Japanese girl never breaks her doll.'

Perhaps modern man with a scientific bent of mind, owing to preoccupation with the world around him as the source of material comforts provided by science and technology, may laugh at the idea and call it childish. But, if he gains some understanding of the spiritual truth underlying the universe we perceive through our five senses of knowledge, he may feel inclined to revise his stand. It is well known that even the scientist, in trying to understand phenomena occurring around him, tries to approach the unknown through the known, and in so doing not unoften arrives at more than one explanation of a phenomenon, the different explanations being valid under different conditions. To mention just one example: whether light is a particle or a wave. In some experiments light exhibits a behaviour as if it were a particle, and in some others it behaves as if it were a wave. So is light a particle or a wave? It depends on the experiment.

It is therefore not impossible that a doll, which to our material vision may seem just a piece of inert matter, may become animated when viewed with what is called 'love-eyes' (which expression is used to include all our faculties, not merely that of vision).

To most of us who are steeped in material thoughts what we see in a temple is just

an image made of stone or clay. We pray before the deity like children—literally our ignorance of the presence of the Deity invoked in the image makes us resemble children in the field of spirituality.

However, to Sri Ramakrishna, the image, under his powerful current of spiritual love and longing, reveals itself as conscious. The image of Bhavatarani in the temple of Dakshineswar comes alive and both the unique worshipper and the Worshipped have intimate talks, which we ordinary beings can hardly understand or explain. The image, becoming animated, even breathes! She is seen moving about making pleasant sounds with the tinkling of the anklets on Her feet; She expresses concern for the sinking millions, looking one way and another, with dishevelled hair. Sri Ramakrishna even talks to Her: would She take the food first, or perhaps he should partake of it first? And during his days of sadhana, whenever he would undertake any new form of sadhana, he had to get the consent of the Divine Mother. This even amused the revered Totapuri under whom Sri Ramakrishna performed the Vedanta sadhana. Not to talk of the image, even the utensils used in the worship radiated consciousness.

The signs of true love (and it is rare) as Swami Vivekananda has listed are:

(1) Love seeks no return: This nature of real love is the first angle of the triangle of love. Ask nothing in return for the love that is expressed. We ought always to take the position of the giver.

(2) Love knows no fear. This is the second angle of the triangle of love: So long as there is any fear in the heart, how can there be love also? Love conquers all fear. Giving the example of a mother's love which is one

of the highest forms of worldly love, Swami Vivekananda says: 'Think of a young mother in the street and a dog barking at her; she is frightened and flies into the nearest house. But suppose the next day she is in the street with her child, and a lion springs upon the child. Where will be her position now? Of course, in the very mouth of the lion, protecting her child. Love conquers all fear. Fear comes from the selfish idea of cutting one's self off from the universe. The smaller and the more selfish I make myself, the more is my fear.'¹

(3) Love knows no rival, for in it is always embodied the lover's highest ideal. True love never comes until the object of our love becomes to us our highest ideal. And this constitutes the third angle of the triangle of love.

It is because most of us do not fulfil these three requirements in our feeling of love, namely, seeking no return, freedom from fear, and perception of the highest ideal in the object loved by us, that we fail to manifest that high intensity love which when directed even towards so-called dead matter around us would see everything full of spirit. In fact, in the words of Swamiji, we are *traders* in love. When we say we love someone or something, it is often just barter. What we do in the name of love is a business transaction!

To take another example of this sacred form of love which we quoted in passing in the editorial of the December issue: Sri Ramakrishna's going to the garden-house of Jadunath Mallick situated to the south of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. This is a place he was accustomed to go to now and then. It happened that one day Sri Ramakrishna, to whom had been read the Bible and who thus had come to know of the pure life of Jesus, while looking at some of the pictures

hanging on the walls in the parlour of the house, chanced to glance at the picture of the child Jesus in his mother's lap. We have all seen such pictures, and pictures they remain to us. But in Sri Ramakrishna's case the picture transported his mind to the thinking of the extraordinary life of the Son of God, 'the picture came to life and effulgent rays of light coming out from the bodies of the mother and the Child entered into his heart'. Was it a figment of imagination? Was it the result of a diseased brain? Certainly not. And it is a sad matter that we have not become pure enough in our lives to understand the intensity of that love, we have not learned to love an ideal with that keenness, we have not developed that perception, and, instead, we have learned to develop disbelief in these occurrences.

In the words of Sister Nivedita, among many of the achievements of Swamiji tending to harmonize apparently conflicting ideas, one was to break all distinctions between the sacred and the secular. We are accustomed to divide our daily activities into two compartments: the one called secular and the other called sacred. Secular duties are called work, and the sacred activities are glorified as worship. Thus with the same mind performing both the sacred and the secular duties in life, we see that the performance of the sacred acts is attended with an eye for sincerity, perfection, devotion and dedication; while the secular activities are considered mundane—not so important, and therefore receive scant attention towards perfection, punctuality and devotion. Hence we exhibit a twin personality as it were. In the field of work we are of one kind and in the field of worship we are another. Added to this we view work as a hinderance to worship. Thereby we tend to shirk work. This could really be due to laziness and a lack of incentive to take up an arduous work. Some others view worship as a hinderance to work! And they tend to look upon every form of worship as mere work.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 3, pp. 88–9. [Hereafter, CW.]

Thus even worship becomes a drudgery. It was Swamiji who removed this distinction between work and worship, equating the two so that man could gradually raise himself to perform every work as an act of worship—beginning with performing work and worship, then raising oneself to the concept of performing work as worship, and finally seeing that every work *is* worship. It is only when selfishness leaves us, and we become 'Self'-ish that we can rise to the position of worshipping humanity around us. That is the basis of true love. The Hindu scriptures teach us to look upon our mother, father, Guru and guest as God. Swami Vivekananda added, that we should look upon the illiterate, the poor as our Gods. At one time, saddened by the poverty of the country, he even suggested that we should throw overboard all the idols and worship India, our motherland. It is interesting and instructive how from the worship of images Swamiji extrapolated the idea of worship to include all Existence.

Our religion teaches us that 'All that exists is Brahman'. Yet we try to create differences in the objects we perceive around us. Our scriptures say: 'He thought, "Let me become many."' This tendency to multiply by creating distinctions has become a disease with us. We see human beings around us and try to differentiate between them on the basis of their nationality, race, religion, colour, caste, religious belief.... When we try to be kind to a person, our kindness is usually born out of a humanitarian consideration—rarely is it because of the perception of the Self-identity. Swamiji's perception of the world around him had no such distinctions. His was a unique mind, a mind that vibrated in unison with all other minds. He could feel for all humankind with a feeling of oneness. And what bothered him always was the misery of humankind, both in the West and in the East.

During the first real encounter between Sri Ramakrishna and Narendranath, Sri

Ramakrishna recognizes in his beloved Naren the 'the ancient sage, Nara, incarnation of Narayana, born on earth to remove the miseries of mankind'. That is the purpose of the advent of the incarnations in general—the protection of the righteous, the removal of the wickedness of the wicked and the establishment of a religion relevant to the age in which they come—, and Sri Ramakrishna in particular. Narendranath, who was immersed in meditation, was brought to our midst by Sri Ramakrishna to play the role of being his chief apostle and the leader of the band of all-renouncing monks who were to form members of his Order at its inception in Cossipore. And this mission, to remove the miseries of humankind, was entrusted to Swamiji by Sri Ramakrishna himself.

Some time ago we had occasion to dwell on the wandering days (itineracy) of Swami Vivekananda after the mahasamadhi of Sri Ramakrishna. That brought him in close contact with the people of India, the poor and the rich, the low and the high, the educated and the uneducated. His continued study of Humanity took him across the seas to the West, where again he had occasion to study the western mind and its specific need. Thus like an expert physician he travelled, led by a Divine hand, feeling, on the one hand, the pulse of the people of India representing the land which had made it her life's endeavour to pursue the spiritual ideal, and, on the other, that of the people of the West which, young as it was, had made pursuit of science, technology, commercial supremacy or democracy as the desirable goals to achieve.

That he loved the West is obvious from that opening utterance addressing his audience at the Parliament of Religions as 'Sisters and brothers of America'. That he loved the West is also clear from his deep study of the western life-style. While admiring their power to combine and organize, he pointed out that the whole of the Western world was

sitting on a volcano which might erupt at any time if its spiritual consciousness was not roused. He admired the western society for the freedom it gave to women and for allowing society to grow, but criticized the restrictions placed in the field of religion so that its religion became stagnated and a matter of drill. He freely gave the message of Atman in a land peopled by the so-called *mlechhas*, giving them the good news of the original purity of the Atman in place of the depressing feeling that human beings have inherited the sin of Adam. All this came at the ripe moment when the field was ready for at least some who were looking for religious inspiration that had a scientific basis, and who, having finished with the enjoyment of material comforts, were ready for Vedanta.

One day when Swamiji was at Belur Math his sleep was disturbed at night. On being questioned the reason for his sleeplessness, he expressed that he had felt a sort of shock and had woken up. His heart was keenly feeling the misery of many people afflicted somewhere on the earth in some accident. Could that be real? Later, it was learnt from the newspaper that on that very day there had been a volcanic eruption near Fiji and many people had suffered and lost their lives.

A similar feeling of intense suffering came over him when, after the first day's session of the Parliament of Religions, he became widely known as the hero of the Parliament. Even amidst the applause he could not forget how much his countrymen were suffering. He could not lie on the comfortable mattress that was provided for him to sleep on. Though physically in distant America, in his thoughts he became united with the sufferings of the sunken millions of India. And he prayed:

O Mother, what do I care for name and fame when my motherland remains sunk in utmost poverty! To what a sad pass have we poor Indians come when

millions of us die for want of a handful of rice, and here they spend millions of rupees upon their personal comforts! Who will raise the masses in India! Who will give them bread?²

What we have tried to show is that Swami Vivekananda had come on earth as the redeemer of all humankind. And though it may appear to some that Swami Vivekananda did much good to India, yet it must be admitted that even in so doing he was doing good to all humankind. For, upon the survival of India depended the survival of all that is noble and elevating in human civilization. His love for India justifiably was immense, no doubt. And his love for the West was as keen.

It was Sister Christine who writes in her reminiscences about the Swami's love for India in the following words:

Our love for India came to birth, I think, when we first heard him say the word 'India', in that marvellous voice of his. It seems incredible that so much could have been put into one small word of five letters. There was love, passion, pride, longing, adoration, tragedy, chivalry, and again love. Whole volumes could not have produced such a feeling in others. It had the magic power of creating love in those who heard it. Ever after, India became the land of heart's desire. Everything concerning her became of interest—became living—her people, her history, architecture, her manners and customs, her rivers, mountains, plains, her culture, her great spiritual concepts, her scriptures.³

And we believe that the same tender feeling was clothed in those simple five words, 'Sis-

2. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1993, vol. 1, p. 439. [Hereafter *The Life*.])

3. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, His Eastern and Western Admirers (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1994), p. 151.

ters and Brothers of America' which he uttered before an audience comprising some of the best minds of the world, who spontaneously rose to their feet as a tribute to something they knew not what. Was it not Swami Vivekananda's Immense Love that made this possible?

Josephine MacLeod, a great admirer of Swamiji, who looked upon him as her friend, once asked him: 'Swami, how can I best help you?' and Swamiji replied, 'Love India!' Truly Swami Vivekananda was a 'condensed India'. Sister Nivedita reflecting upon this union between Swamiji and India in love said,

Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed.... he was a born lover, and the queen of his adoration was his Motherland. Like some delicately-poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that fell upon it, was his heart to all that concerned her. Not a sob was heard within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo.⁴

Jogeshchandra Datta, whom Swamiji had known in his school-days at the Metropolitan Institution, heard Swamiji at Naini Tal, and recounting his impression writes,

He was a Tyagi, he had renounced the world, and yet India was in the inmost depth of his soul. India was his love, he felt and wept for India, he died for India. India throbbed in his breast, beat in his pulses, in short, was inseparably bound up with his very life....⁵

In writing an introduction to the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Sister Nivedita says:

These, then—the Shāstras, the Guru and the Motherland—are the three notes that mingle themselves to form the music

of the works of Vivekananda.

Quite interestingly however, Swami Vivekananda while asking Swami Turiyananda to take charge of the Shanti Ashrama in the U.S.A. said: 'Hoist the flag of Vedanta there; from this moment destroy even the memory of India.'⁶

And to his brother disciples in India he wrote in 1894, 'As Sri Ramakrishna used to love you, as I love you, come, *love the world* like that.' Truly it may be said of Swami Vivekananda that he belonged to all humankind. And his own attitude was: 'Doubtless I do love India. But every day my sight grows clearer. What is India, or England, or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called MAN.'⁷ It is with a twin ideal in mind that he later started the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati, a place where the western disciples would get trained in Vedanta and dedicate themselves for doing good to the masses of India while simultaneously it was to serve as a place to train monks for spreading the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda-Vedanta in the West.

Two incidents in the life of Swami Vivekananda reveal that apart from his intellectual understanding of the history of nations, both eastern and western, there was an undercurrent of intense love for all nations with their merits and defects, which made the topography of the different countries Swamiji visited come alive even as he portrayed their history in a vivid language. It is as if these landscapes became animated under the power of his tremendous love and revealed to him in an intimate way their history, their rising to power, their contribution to other nations, and also their downfall. Those who were fortunate to be with Swamiji marvelled at the immensity of knowledge Swamiji had about every place

4. *The Master As I Saw Him*, (Calcutta; Udbodhan, 1972), p. 47.

5. *The Life*, vol. 2, p. 334.

6. *Apstles of Sri Ramakrishna*, (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), p. 73.

7. *CW*, vol. 8, p. 349.

he visited.

In her reminiscences Mrs. Sevier writes:

Viewing the ruins of Rome the Swami was very quiet at first, but the more one watched him, the more convinced one became of the interest that lay behind his outward calm.... As he went from place to place, he began to voice his observations, mingling with them such a wealth of knowledge of history and architecture that a glamour was thrown around the ancient monuments. His talk went flowing on as he traced the rise of the imperial idea under the Roman Empire,... and he described its decline, when the people and their rulers were alike corrupt. Thus he resurrected the inhabitants, the culture, and the events of the great past, and those who were with him remarked; 'This is wonderful, Swami! You seem to know every stone in Rome!'... The solemnity of Rome and the solemnity of his own personality mingled in a strange and glorious harmony in the minds of his companions. And in his comparisons between the Roman and the Indian world, they had intellectual illumination as gratifying as the study of Rome's immortal work of art and beauty, with which their days and his were filled.⁸

We have a similar expression of Swamiji's historic consciousness and love for India when the Swami and his companions journeyed from Calcutta to Naini Tal. 'With passionate enthusiasm he would introduce them to each matter of interest.... The greatness of Patna and of Varanasi, later the splendours of the old Nawab courts of Lucknow, were each described with such ardour and absorption that his listeners felt that they were in his country's past. There was not a city that he did not look on with tenderness, and whose history he did not know. When traversing the Terai, he made them feel that the very earth beneath them

was that on which the Buddha had passed the days of his youth and renunciation in search of the highest truth. The gorgeous peacocks that now and then flew past, would lend occasion for a graphic account of the invincible Rajputs. ...Then again, there were accounts of famines and pestilences.... The piety of the Hindus on the banks of the Ganga, and the piety of the Mussalman kneeling in prayer at the appointed hours, were in his eyes equally Indian.... The disciples, hearing his portrayals, the poetic or the more philosophical, could now feel the full truth of what he had said to an English friend on leaving the West, 'India I loved before I came away: now the very dust of India has become holy to me; the very air is now to me holy; it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Tirtha.'⁹

Coming back to the letter of Swamiji to Shrimati Sarala Ghosal dated 6 April 1897, he adds therein,

I too believe that India will awake again if anyone could love with all his heart the people of the country—bereft of the grace of affluence, of blasted fortune, their discretion totally lost, downtrodden, ever-starved, quarrelsome, and envious. Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen who are gradually sinking lower and lower in the vortex of destitution and ignorance.

Shall we not strive with what little power is at our disposal to rise up to this expectation of Swamiji—to love India and the whole world? Shall we not, in the immortal words of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, learn to make the whole world our own? □

8. *Life*, vol. 2, pp. 155, 157.

9. *Life*, vol. 2, pp. 330-2.



Atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya cha
(For one's own liberation and for the good of the world)

**THE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS
OF
THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION
1997-1998**

The Mission has decided to celebrate the centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission from May 1, 1997 to 1998. And, as a prelude to this, the Mission will also celebrate the centenary of Swamiji's return from abroad. The purpose of the celebrations is to make people, in India and also outside, conscious that the goal of life is, first and foremost, spiritual realization.

**CELEBRATION OF SWAMIJI'S RETURN
FROM THE WEST**

Swamiji first set foot on Indian soil on January 26, 1897, at Pamban and then went to Rameswaram the next day. On February 2 he arrived at Madurai, and on February 6 at Madras. From there he took a boat to Budge Budge, arriving on February 18. Then at 7.30 the following morning (February 19) he reached Sealdah Station in Calcutta. He was given a reception that same day at Ripon College (now called Surendranath College), and on February 28 he was given a Civic reception at the Shovabazar Raj Bari.

It will be fitting if appropriate tributes are paid to Swamiji all over India, especially at the places mentioned above and at the places he covered during his Indian tour. The dates for these should preferably be close to the centenary dates of his visit. **Branch centres of the Ramakrishna Order, as well as sympathetic groups, are requested to celebrate Swamiji's visit to those places in a suitable manner.** Suggested topics for discussion at these celebrations are:

1. The impact of Swamiji's visit to the West on the Western mind.
2. The impact of Swamiji's visit to the West on the Indian mind.
3. Swamiji's contribution to the reawakening of India.
4. How Swamiji was received in different places in India.
5. How Swamiji's speeches electrified the whole nation.
6. Swamiji's call to his countrymen and their response.
7. The strengths and weaknesses of India, according to Swamiji.
8. Swamiji's vision of a new India.
9. India's role in shaping a new world.
10. Practical Vedanta: Concept and Application.

The discussions should be non-communal and non-sectarian. The emphasis should be on the fact that Swamiji's success was not the success of an individual or a sect or a community; it was the success of all the people of India. It was the success of eternal India—that is, of love and goodwill.

CELEBRATION OF THE MISSION'S CENTENARY

At the inaugural meeting of the Mission, Swamiji had briefly explained the aims and objectives of the Mission. Unfortunately, however, even today not many people know the objectives of the Mission and what makes it unique. People may know of its work, but they know little or nothing of the spirit behind the work. This is why the Mission authorities have decided to celebrate the centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission on a large scale. The following are the programmes planned:

1. The Mission's centenary celebration will begin with special pujas at Belur Math and Balaram Mandir on 1 May 1997.
—In addition, a Public Meeting, in which the aims and objects of the Mission will be discussed, will be held that afternoon, possible at Girish Manch, Baghbazar.
2. Public meetings will be held in major cities of the country. The branch centres should also observe that day (1st May) with puja and, wherever possible, by organizing public meetings. The centres in State capitals especially should observe the day on a grand scale.
3. In addition to this, public meetings will be held wherever and whenever possible. They should be spaced out so that people may be aware that the year is a special year—a year dedicated to Swamiji.
4. Processions, exhibitions, various competitions and youth activities may also be held. Video cassettes should also be produced for distribution at a nominal price.
5. Celebrations will be conducted by all branch centres, irrespective of whether they are Math or Mission centres. Centres abroad should also celebrate the centenary of the Mission in an appropriate manner.
6. The cooperation of the media will be solicited to give the widest possible publicity to the work of the Mission. This may also include the internet.

PUBLICATIONS

1. A special volume, *The Ramakrishna Mission: One Hundred Years*, containing articles contributed by distinguished scholars from different countries, will be published.
2. Special issues of our journals will also be published, and scholars will be invited to contribute relevant articles. Other journals may also be requested to bring out special issues, and the media may be asked to highlight the Mission's contributions.
3. Booklets will be published in different languages, focussing attention on Swamiji's message of service. These will be distributed free, or at a nominal price.

CONCLUDING CELEBRATIONS

The year-long celebration will conclude with meetings in Calcutta and at Belur Math, in which scholars from different countries and of different faiths will participate. An exhibition may also be held at Belur Math illustrating the Mission's work in various fields.

GENERAL COMMITTEE

In order to implement the centenary celebrations, a General Committee is being set up. Membership in this committee will be open to all sympathetic to the aims and objectives of the Mission, irrespective of nationality or creed. For admission to the committee, members should register by giving a minimum donation of rupees two hundred each. They may enrol through any branch of the Ramakrishna Mission, or institutions/individuals authorized by the Secretary of the General Committee.

Members of the General Committee will be entitled to a special discount on the Commemorative Volume published on the occasion of the Centenary. They will also be able to attend programmes at Belur Math and/or elsewhere on a priority basis, subject to the conditions mentioned in that connection.

The President and the Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Mission will be ex-officio President and Vice-Presidents of the Committee. The General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission will also be an ex-officio Vice-President. Swami Lokeswarananda, of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, will be Secretary of the Committee. In addition, there will be an Executive Committee, comprised of some senior monks of the Order.

All correspondence should be directed to:

Swami Lokeswarananda, Secretary
Ramakrishna Mission Centenary Celebrations
 Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture
 Gol Park, Calcutta 700 029

Phone: (91-33) 464-1303, (91-33) 466-1235, **Fax:** (91-33) 464-1307



All donations in this regard may be sent through Cheque/Draft drawn in favour of
'Ramakrishna Mission Centenary Celebrations'

Donations are exempted from Income Tax under Section 80G of the
 Indian Income Tax Act, 1961

Information about the Centenary Celebrations will be available from time to time
 in the following journals of the Ramakrishna Mission:

*Udbodhan, Prabuddha Bharata, Vedanta Kesari, Vivek Jyoti (Hindi),
 Sri Ramakrishna Jyot (Gujarati), Sri Ramakrishna Vijayam (Tamil),
 Sri Ramakrishna Prabha (Telugu), Prabuddha Keralam (Malayalam),
 Jivan Vikas (Marathi)*



The Return of Swami Vivekananda*

A Sanskrit monthly journal, Vidyodaya, edited by Sri Hrisikesh Shastri of Bhatpara, 24-Parganas, W.B., used to be published from the Oriental Nobility Institute in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

In the April 1897 (26th year) issue of Vidyodaya, an unsigned article in Sanskrit, entitled 'Vivekānanda-Svāminah Pratyāvṛttiḥ', describing Swami Vivekananda's coming to Calcutta in February 1897 appeared. It is not clear who wrote that article. From a perusal of the article it is clear that the author, whoever it was, looked upon Swamiji as an upholder of traditional religion based on varṇāśrama and had the misapprehension that Swamiji was bent upon declaring himself as a new avatār. He even considered it his duty to admonish Swamiji in this regard. Any way, without speculating on the possible authorship of the article, we reproduce it here with an English rendering, mainly as an interesting instance of contemporary journalism and expression of opinion.

विवेकानन्दस्वामिनः प्रत्यावृत्तिः

श्रीमद्रामकृष्णपरमहंसदेवस्य शिष्यप्रवरः श्रीविवेकानन्दस्वामीति नाम्ना विश्रुतः श्रीमान् नरेन्द्रनाथदत्तः मार्किनादिसुसभ्यदेशेषु स्वधर्मप्रचारं कृत्वा साम्प्रतं स्वजन्मभूमिं प्रत्यावृत्तः, प्रत्युद्गृहीतश्च महोत्सवोत्तरेणादरेण स्वदेश-महत्तरैः कृतविद्यैः। तस्यागमनदिवसे खलु शिवादहवाष्पशटकविश्राममन्दिरात् रिपणविद्यालयावधि यावान् राजमार्गः पूर्णकुम्भकदलीस्तम्भपल्लवपुष्पमालालङ्कृतैः सपताकैर्बहुविधकृत्रिमतोरणैरलङ्कृतः, विमल-सलिलसेकनीरजीकृतः, पार्श्वतश्च सपताकपुष्पशेखरपल्लवमयस्तम्भश्रेणीसनाथः परां शोभां प्रतिपेदे। तदुभयपार्श्ववर्तिनी सौधावली पुनः स्वागतवादचित्रमयविचित्रकुसुमदामशालिनी निरन्तरगगनभेदिजलकलकल-निःसारिणी स्वामिनं प्रति स्वाधिष्ठातृणामान्तरीणश्रद्धां सूचयामास।

अथ तदागमनक्षणे तु—

समन्तात् तद्दिदृक्षासमाकृष्ट-ससम्भ्रममागतासंख्यनागरजनपदभ रदलिता नगरी ह्येकतो निमग्नेव प्रयत्नोन्नमितानमदफणाविशेषेण सर्पराजेन कथञ्चिद् दिधृता नाकाले प्रलयजलराशिसमाप्लवन-क्लेशमनुभूतवती। क्षणेनैव सर्वतो राजपथस्तत्पार्श्वस्थिता सौधावली तरुराजिरन्यान्यप्युच्चनीचैःस्थानानि सर्वविधमानवसमाकीर्णानि दुष्प्रवेश्यान्तराणि मनुष्यमयानीव निरन्तराणीव बभूवुरम्बरतलञ्च युगपत्तथाविध-जनसमवायकण्ठनिःसृतोच्चैर्जयनिना देन संभिन्नं दूरीकृतान्यनिनादं जयध्वनिमयमासीत्। तदानीं जनानां नेत्राणि तदागमनप्रतीक्षणपराणि निष्पन्दतराणि निर्निमेषाणि च सञ्जातानि, कर्णयुगानि तदीयजयनादाकर्णनवधिरितानि न जगृहुः शब्दान्तराणि, आननान्यपि तज्जयघोषणव्यापृतानि नोच्चारयामासुरन्यत् किमपि, हस्तयुगलानि तु तदभिवादनसमुत्तोलितानि व्यापारान्तरविरहितान्यासन् हृदयानि पुनस्तद्दर्शनकौतूहलाक्रान्तानि नान्यविषयिनीं चिन्तां प्रपेदिरे, किं बहुना तदानीं तेषां सर्वाणि खलु सबाह्यान्तराणीन्द्रियाणि सर्वात्मना तन्मयतामिव प्राप्तानि, स्वसन्निहितान्यपि विषयान्तराणि न विदन्ति स्म। ततश्च ते मानवा विस्मृतात्मसत्त्वाः सव्यापारा अपि स्वार्थव्यापारशून्यास्तमेव पश्यन्तस्तमेव ध्यायन्तस्तत्कथाञ्च कथयन्तस्तेन सह सर्वात्मनैक्यं भजमानाः विवेकानन्दाद्वैतरससागरे निमग्ना बभूवुः।

Avoiding incomprehensible literalness, the Sanskrit original has been translated by Sri Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee, Calcutta, who is associated with the Advaita Ashrama for several years. We are thankful to Swami Videhatmananda, Raipur, editor of *Vivek Jyoti*, the Hindi quarterly of the Ramakrishna Order. He supplied us the Sanskrit text he had painstakingly copied down from the *Vidyodaya* issue he found in the National Library, Calcutta.—Ed.

अथ प्रातः किञ्चिद्गगनान्तरमतिक्रामति भगवति सहस्ररश्मिमालिनि दिवसकरे, सर्वथा प्रसादमापन्ने दिक्चक्रवाले, मन्दं मन्दं प्रवहति च नवोत्फुल्लवासन्तकुसुमदामसौरभभारमन्थरे सुशीतले प्रातःसमीरणे, सशिष्य-श्रीमद्विवेकानन्दाधिष्ठितं विशेषवाष्पीयशकटं तदभ्युद्गमसमवेतमहाजनमण्डलीहृदयसहानुभूतिं प्रदर्शयत् मृदुगत्या मन्द्रध्वनिमादधानं शिवादहस्थितविराममन्दिरमुपतस्थौ।

ततः समुपस्थिते च शकटे, उच्चचार खलु समवेतजनमण्डलीयुगपदुच्चरितो गगनभेदी लोमहर्षणः सुमहानानन्दकलकलः। अथ श्रीमान् विवेकानन्दः द्वारवक्त्राधीश्वरेण सादरं शकटादवतारितः तदर्थमेव सज्जीकृतं स्वेच्छया धुर्यतां नीतैः सुभद्रमनुजयुवभिर्वह्यमानं शकटमारुह्य सुबहुसमाजमुखोज्ज्वलरत्नभूतसुजन-निवहैरनुगम्यमानः शनैः शनैर्दिदृक्षुजनवृन्दविस्फारितनिर्निमेषनेत्रनिचयैः सतृष्णमापीयमानस्तन्मुखनिःसृता-म्बरस्पर्शिसानन्दजयध्वनिमा कर्णयन् समभ्यर्चितश्च तैः पुष्पस्तवकवृष्टिभीराजपथमतीत्य रिपणविद्यामन्दिरमा-जगाम। एतावदेव तद्दिनवृत्तम्।

ततः फेब्रुवारिमासस्याष्टाविंशे दिवसे रविवासरे मध्याह्ने स्वर्गगतस्य राधाकान्तदेवबहादुरस्य शोभाबाजारस्थभवने तस्य प्रत्युद्गमनार्थं कलिकातावास्तव्यमहाजनसमाजैर्महती सभा कृता। राजश्रीयुतविजयकृष्णदेवबहादुरस्तस्याः सभाया अधिनेता बभूव। समाहूता अपि वयं दुरदृष्टहेतुकवलवत्-शरीरासुस्थतया न तत्र गन्तुं शक्ता इति वर्वर्तितरां दुरपनेयः खलु सुमहान् हृदयखेदः, अथवा का नाम शक्तिरत्यल्पसाराणां मादृशां बलवतीं दैवीं बाधामतिक्रमितुम्? भवतु तत्राप्यसौ महतादरेण प्रत्युद्-गृहीतोऽभिनन्दितञ्चास्मत् समाजधुर्यसज्जनवर्यैः। श्रीमन्तं विवेकानन्दमुद्दिश्य जन्मभूम्युक्तिरूपाः कति श्लोकाः समासादिता अस्माभिस्ते ह्यत्रैव प्रकाशयन्ते।

आगच्छ वत्स क्षरति प्रसह्य, स्तन्यं मदीयं त्वयि दृष्टिमाप्ते।
चित्तं तमेदं द्रवतामुपैति, द्रागुच्छलत्स्नेहरसेन चाद्य॥१॥
लब्धा जयश्रीर्भवता विमर्दे, नानादिगन्तागतधर्मवीरैः।
क्षेत्रे 'चिकागो' प्रथितेऽतिदूरे, ह्येकाकिनापि श्रुतमत्र यावत्॥२॥
ततोऽन्यदेशेष्वपि निर्मलाभां, विदग्धतां स्वां वचसा वितत्य।
स्वधर्ममाहात्म्यमशेषतोयत्, समर्थितं सत्सुधियां समक्षम्॥३॥
वृत्तं किलैतत् श्रुतिगोचरत्वं, यावन्ममाप्तं पुनरेव तावत्।
असीमहर्षाकुललोलमेतत्, स्वस्मिन्न चेतः प्रबभूव धीर॥४॥
दशां सुशोच्यां गमिता चिरस्य, कालेन किं वा नियतिप्रभावैः।
शून्यं सदैतत् परिलोकयामि, सर्वं जगद् घोरतमिस्रपूर्णम्॥५॥
आशा विलुप्ता हृदयञ्च भग्नं, नित्यं सुतीव्राच्छिदुरार्तिधारा।
प्रबाधते मां कथयामि किं वा, जानाति देवः परमः स हंसः॥६॥
सुदुर्दिनेऽस्मिन् भवदीयवृत्तं, घोरातिघोरे तमसीव दीपः।
क्षणं क्षणं मज्जयतीव चित्तं, आनन्दसिन्ध्याववशं मदीयम्॥७॥
आर्षेयधर्मध्वजजालमुच्चैः, आरोप्य पारेजलधिं समन्तात्।
प्रत्यागतं त्वां जयिनं सशिष्यं, समीक्ष्य नाहं प्रभुरात्मनोऽस्मि॥८॥
एहोहि मे वत्स चिरायुरेताम्, आलिङ्ग मां गाढतरं चिराय।
तदङ्गसंस्पर्शसुखैरिदानीं, चिरस्य तापं लघयामि सद्यः॥९॥
यद्यप्यसाधारणबुद्धिवृत्त्या, स्वामित्वमाप्तो बहुमानहेतुम्।
तथापि पुत्रेत्युपदेशनार्हः, चिराय मातुः शिशुतात्मजस्य॥१०॥
सम्यक् स्वसत्तां जगतीतलेऽस्मिन्, विस्मृत्य मानं सहजं विहाय।
शुश्रूषणां येऽखिलमानवानाम्, अकल्पयन् स्वामतिपूतवृत्तिम्॥११॥
पदं तथोच्चैरपि येऽधिरूढा, धनेन मानेन सुविद्यया वा।
प्रख्यापयामासुरतीव नम्रा, दासेति नाम्ना निजमानमत्र॥१२॥
कुले पवित्रे त्वमसि प्रसूतो, मनस्विनां मानवताममीषाम्।
प्राप्तः समुच्चैः पदमात्मशक्त्या, त्याक्षीर्व्रतं मा स्वकुलोचितं त्वम्॥१३॥

अत्यल्पसारैरनुदारचितैः, पराङ्मुखैश्चापरसौख्यकृत्यात्।
 अशेषसङ्गादभितो विरम्य, सन्यास आसेव्यत एक एव॥१४॥
 सन्यासिता सा भवदीयपूर्वैः, ज्ञाता निषिद्धाचरणेन तुल्या।
 सन्यासभावं भजतस्तवातः, कुटुम्बमास्तां वसुधाऽखिलैषा॥१५॥
 मा भूर्जनोघैः परिपूजितोऽपि, दृप्तस्त्वमस्मिन् निजगौरवेण।
 भवेर्विनम्रो जनताहितार्थी, सेवस्व लोकान् गुरुणादरेण॥१६॥
 लोके सदाचारविवर्तनं हि, व्रतं सतां स्वीकृतमेव शिष्टैः।
 आचारपूतैरत एव भाव्यम्, इच्छाद्विरस्मिन् जनतासुशिक्षाम्॥१७॥
 चेद्धर्ममार्गे पथिकत्वमाप्तुम्, इच्छा प्रगल्भा भवतोऽस्ति धीर।
 श्रीशाक्यसिंहानपि गौरपादान्, संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य प्रवर्तितव्यम्॥१८॥

जन्मभूमेर्वचनमिदम् अस्माकम् अतीव हृदयहारी वर्तते, स्वामिना विवेकानन्देनापि वचनमिदं सर्वथा-
 ऽनुसरणीयम्। अस्माकमपि तं प्रति बहु वक्तव्यमस्ति। यथा-

प्रथमन्तावत् तं प्रति वर्णाश्रमाचारिसमाजमुखपात्रैर्यद्बहुमानं प्रदर्शितं, न तत्र तस्य यूरोपीयसभ्यसमाजेषु
 वचनविन्यासचातुर्यं कारणं, यत इतःपूर्वमपि बहुभिर्भारतवासिभिस्तथाविधं कर्मानुष्ठितं, प्रदर्शितं च
 असाधारणात्मवैदग्ध्यं परं न ते वर्णाश्रमाचारिसमाजधुरन्धरैः एवम् आदरेण प्रत्युद्गृहीताः। न वा तस्य
 शिष्यायमानब्राह्मणतनयशिर(?)च रणार्पणसाहसिक्यं तत्र कारणं तादृशकर्माप्यत्र नाभिनवं, ब्राह्मणतनया
 यावल्लोभपरवशाः, सर्वानर्थहेत्वर्थार्जनसक्त्येतसः स्वाभाविकब्रह्मवर्चसाय जलाञ्जलिं दत्त्वा, स्ववृत्तिं परिहाय,
 निषिद्धाचरणानि कर्तुमारेभिरे, यावदेव तेषां शिरांसि घोष-दास-सेन-गुप्त-जनचरणेषु पुनः पुनः प्रणतानि
 दृश्यन्ते वर्णाश्रमगुरुवंशसम्भूता अपि ते न मनाग् लज्जन्ते हीनवर्णशिष्यत्वम् अङ्गीकर्तुम्। तस्य तथाविध
 आदरकारणन्तु सुसभ्यसमुन्नतपाश्चात्यजनपदेषु वर्णाश्रमधर्म-जयपताकास्थापनम्। स सर्वेष्वेव पाश्चात्यप्रदेशेषु
 वर्णाश्रमधर्मस्यैव श्रेष्ठतां सम्पाद्य स्वदेशं प्रत्यागत इत्येवात्रत्यानां गरीयान् प्रत्ययः। अतस्तेन सर्वात्मना,
 सर्वाभिश्चेष्टाभिश्च प्रत्ययस्यास्य दार्ढ्यं सम्पादनीयम्।

किञ्च तेन।

‘यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
 अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥
 परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
 धर्मसंरक्षणार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे॥’

इत्यादिभगवद्वाक्यमुद्धृत्य स्वस्यावतारत्वप्रख्यापनात् प्राक् स्वकीयधर्मस्वरूपप्रदर्शने यत्नः करणीयः।
 यतोऽद्यापि अस्य गुरोः श्रीमत्परमहंसदेवस्य विज्ञातारः खलु भारते मुष्टिमेया एव। सन्त्यत्र बहवो येषां
 कर्णकुहरे तदीयपवित्रनामापि नाद्यावधि प्रविष्टम्। ततश्च सुशिष्येण तेन जनसमवायेषु तन्माहात्म्यं
 तदुपदिष्टधर्मस्य च सनातनत्वं प्रख्यापनीयम्। अन्यथा शङ्कराचार्यजन्मभूमौ, नानोपनिषदारण्यकादिवेदान्त-
 निबन्धसङ्कुले भारते शुद्धाद्वैतवादोपदेशप्रयासः खलु विडम्बनमेव स्यात्।

किञ्च।

को नाम धर्मो भारतवासिनां हितकरो, यस्य संरक्षणार्थं जगदीश्वरस्य अवतरणम् अपेक्ष्यते स्म, तस्य
 किं स्वरूपं? का वा तस्य आचरणपद्धतिः? के नाम तत्र अधिकारिणः? के वा धर्मस्यास्य विद्वेषिणः? ते
 किमाचाराः? किंस्वभावाः? किञ्जातीयाश्च? येषामुन्मूलनमन्तरा न तस्य धर्मस्य रक्षा सम्भावनीया, युगस्य
 च कीदृक् परिमाणम्? कियता कालेन च युगान्तरं भवति? इत्यादि विषयाणाम् अतिविशदव्याख्यानं विना
 केवलमरण्यरोदनमिव तस्य वचनं सर्वथा विफलमेव भविष्यति।

खृष्टीयजगति, यथाविधस्य धर्मस्य संरक्षणार्थं महात्मनो यीशोरवतरणापेक्षा अभवत्, तदास्माभिः सम्यगवबुद्धं, तथाविधे समये, तथाविधे देशे, तथाविधस्य महापुरुषस्यावतरणं विना तत्र तत्र प्रदेशेषु कीदृशमुच्छृङ्खलत्वमभविष्यदिति स्वत एवोपलभ्यते। इत्थं महम्मदस्यावतरणमपि सम्यक् तत्तद्देशकालानुरूपम् अभवत्। परमतः परं बहुतिथाः समया अतीता, न तत्र तत्र भूविभागे अवतारान्तरस्य अपेक्षा अदृश्यत, बहवो विमलचारित्र्यसम्पन्ना धर्मैकताना महापुरुषास्तत्र तत्र प्रादुरासन्, किन्तु नैतेष्वेकोऽपि कश्चिदात्मानो अवतारत्वं प्रख्यापितवान्, नापि तेषां देहत्यागादनन्तरं तत्तद्देशनिवासिभिरपि तेषाम् अवतारत्वम् अङ्गीकृतम्। तत् कथमिदानीं भारते महानवतारसम्मर्दः प्रवृत्तः।

यः कश्चित् कथञ्चित् मस्तकं मुण्डयित्वा काषायवसनं परिगृह्य च धर्मविषयिणीं कथां कथयेत्, यदि स एवात्मानोऽवतारत्वम् आकाशेत् तदा कियत्कालादनन्तरं प्राकृतजनेभ्योऽवताराणां संख्या तु वहीयसी स्यात्। तत एव ब्रवीमि, कीदृङ्नाम धर्मो भारतवासिनां प्रकृतहितप्रदः, साम्प्रतं तस्य कीदृग्बाधा संघटिता कैर्वा सा बाधा जनिता? कथं वा तस्य धर्मस्य भूयः संरक्षणं भवेत्? इत्यादि सर्वमकथयित्वा केवलमनर्गलवाग्विन्यासशक्तिं प्रकाश्य परमेशितुः समकक्षतालिप्सा खलु चन्द्रजिघृक्षयोन्नमितबाहुयुगलस्य वामनस्य प्रयत्न इवोपहास्यतां यास्यति।

यद्यस्मद्देशे वर्णाश्रमधर्मस्यैव नैसर्गिकं साधीयस्त्वं, तदा तस्य स संरक्षणोपायस्तु भगवता श्रीकृष्णेन स्वयं सम्यग्विवृतोऽतस्तत्संरक्षणार्थम् अवतारान्तरस्यापेक्षा नास्त्येव। अथ तु तद्विपरीतो जातिभेदादिविचारविरहितो निराकारैकेश्वरोपासनामूलकः कश्चिदभिनवो धर्मविशेषः साम्प्रतं भारतवासिनां कल्याणप्रदतयोपलब्धस्तदा तस्याप्युपदेशकाः सम्भूताः खलु बहवो महात्मानोऽभिनवाचार्यप्रवरास्तदग्रतस्तेषामवतारत्वं मनङ्गीकृत्य तत्पादानुगामिनः कस्यचिद् व्यक्तिविशेषस्य अवतारत्वप्रकल्पनं सर्वथा अनुचितमेव। इत्यलम्।

Recently the principal disciple of revered Ramakrishna Paramahamsadeva, Sri Narendranath Datta, who has become famous as Swami Vivekananda, returned to his motherland, after preaching religion in America and other advanced countries. He was welcomed with great jubilation and admiration by the learned élites of this country. On the day of his arrival, the entire thoroughfare from Sealdah Railway Station to Ripon College was decorated with artificial arches of various forms, which were flanked by water-filled pitchers and banana stems and adorned with twigs, garlands and flags. The road was freed of dust through the sprinkling of clean water. Columns bedecked with flags, flowers and leaves were also erected on the roadside. All this lent great splendour to that stretch of the road. The houses on both sides of the road also bore variegated signs of welcome and flowery decorations. The incessant shouts of cheer of the residents, which rent the air, showed their heart-felt respect for the Swami.

Then came the moment of the Swami's arrival.

From all sides the crowd of innumerable people, who had gathered there drawn by their desire to see the Swami, surged forward in great excitement. It seemed as if the city, pressed down by the combined weight of their feet, got submerged on one side and was somehow held up by the King of Serpents (Vāsuki) by raising with great effort the hood which had been lowered; he seemed to feel, at an unscheduled hour, the oppression of a deluge that engulfs the earth only at the time of universal dissolution. Within moments, the entire thoroughfare, the houses on its sides, the rows of trees, and all other places, high and low, which were full of people of all types, became like an impenetrable continuous mass of humanity. At the same time, the vault of the sky, rent as it was by the shouts emanating from a crowd of that magnitude (which drowned all other sounds), became full of the cheers of victory. Then the eyes of the onlookers, waiting for a view of the Swami's arrival, became

even more steadfast and winkless; their ears, which had been deafened by the shouts, of cheer raised for him, were unable to accept any other sound; their mouths, which were engaged in proclaiming his victory, could not utter anything else; their hands, raised as they were in saluting him, desisted from all other activities; and their minds, filled as they were with the earnest desire to have a view of him, could not entertain any other thought. In short, at that time all their senses, outer and inner, in their entirety became possessed of him and could not take note of even matters close to them. Then all those people, who had forgotten their own self and who were actively occupied but not in any selfish pursuits, looking at the Swami, thinking of and talking about him, and identifying with him wholeheartedly, became interested in the ocean of the essence of nonduality that Vivekananda was.

With the progress of the morning, the sun with his thousand-fold rays came up some distance in the sky. The surroundings assumed an air of perfect bliss. The cool morning breeze laden with the fragrance of freshly blossomed spring flowers began to blow softly. And then the special train in which Swami Vivekananda was seated with his disciples drew slowly into the railway station at Sealdah, emitting a deep low sound, reciprocating, as it were, the feelings of the vast crowd assembled there to welcome him.

As the train arrived, the assembled crowd let out simultaneously an awe-inspiring tremendous shout of joy which rent the sky. Then Swami Vivekananda, who was respectfully helped to alight from the compartment by the Maharaja of Darbhanga¹, got into a decorated carriage specially kept for him. The carriage was hauled by young men from respectable families, who took up and drew the yoke of their own accord. The Swami was followed in by a host of people who were the shining jewels of the various sections of society. People eager to see him avidly drank in the sight of his appearance with wide open steadfast eyes. The soaring sound of the joyful cheers coming out from their mouths entered his ears. Greeted by them with showers of bunches of flowers, he slowly proceeded along the road to reach Ripon College. In this way the happenings on that day went on.

Then, in the afternoon of Sunday, 28 February, the eminent citizens of Calcutta held a huge meeting in the house of late Sri Radha Kanta Deb Bahadur at Shobhabazar to welcome the Swami. The meeting was presided over by Raja Binay Krishna Deb Bahadur. It was our misfortune that, though invited, we could not go there owing to a severe physical illness. It is indeed difficult to get over that great disappointment. But what strength do feeble persons like us possess to overcome the powerful goddess of ill fate? Anyway, there also the Swami was welcomed and felicitated with great affection by leading personalities who form the pillars of our society. We present here a few verses which have been composed by us as an address to revered Swami Vivekananda and which are in the form of 'Words of the Motherland'.

Come my child! As I look at you today, my heart instantly melts pouring forth the nectar of affection, and milk comes out from my breasts in force. (1)

1. According to the authentic biography of Swami Vivekananda, it was Narendra Nath Sen, Editor of the *Indian Mirror* and one of the Vice Presidents of the Reception Committee, who received the Swami at the station.

I have heard that you achieved victory in the encounter at the celebrated field of far-off Chicago and conquered single-handed the stalwarts of religion who came there from various places. (2)

Then in other countries also you spread the pure lustre of your knowledge through oration, and established decisively before their best talents the greatness of your own religion. (3)

O brave one! As soon as these tidings reached my hearing, I was overwhelmed with infinite joy and lost my senses. (4)

With the passage of time or through the dispensation of fate, for long I had been thrown into a deplorable state. I had been looking upon the whole world always as a void full of terrible darkness. (5)

Hope had vanished and my heart had broken. Intense misery had been tearing and tormenting me constantly. What can I say about that?—The Supreme Lord knows all. (6)

At this time of great distress, your achievement is like light in intense darkness. It seems my mind is losing its control and is sinking every moment in a sea of delight! (7)

You erected high the banners of the religion of the ancient sages all around in lands overseas. As I look at you coming back victorious, accompanied by your disciples, I can hardly restrain myself! (8)

Come my child! Be blessed with a long life! Embrace closely for a long time. Now, the blissful contact of your body would instantly lessen the burning heat from which I had been suffering for ages. (9)

Although you have become a leading and revered preceptor by dint of your uncommon genius, yet I consider you a son worthy of some instructions. To a mother, a son is always her child. (10)

In this world there have been men who, forgetting totally their own self and forgoing all the honour that readily came to them, have employed their supremely purified faculties to appease the hunger for knowledge in all human beings. (11)

In spite of having attained high position through wealth, fame or learning, they have remained extremely humble and proclaimed themselves as the servants of others. (12)

You are born in the sacred lineage of such honoured great souls. After reaching the highest status by dint of your own powers, may you not desert the mission which befits your heritage. (13)

There is one type of monasticism which is practised by people of limited strength and narrow mind; they are unconcerned about the happiness of others and cut themselves off totally from all association. (14)

That kind of monasticism has been known to your predecessors as something akin to a forbidden act. Therefore while you follow the ideal of renunciation, let the entire world become like a close relation to you. (15)

Even though you are worshipped by multitudes of people, may you not be conceited about your own glory; may you be a humble well-wisher of the people, who serves them with the utmost care. (16)

As is avowed by the wise, the mission of the holy is to uphold right ideals in this world; as you intend to impart right teachings to the masses, you have to conduct yourself rightly. (17)

O steadfast one! If you have a strong desire to travel along the path of spirituality, remember the lives of Śrī Śākya Simha² and Śrī Gaurāṅga and proceed. (18)

2. Gautama Buddha.

These words of the Motherland strike the chords of our hearts very much and these have to be followed by Swami Vivekananda in all respects. We also have a lot to say to him. Thus, coming to the first point, great respect has been shown to him by the representatives of (traditional) society practising *varṇāśrama* (four-fold divisions into castes and stages of life). The reason for this is not the oratorical skill demonstrated by him in the civilized societies of Europe; for prior to this also many Indians had done similar work and shown extra-ordinary talent, but they had not been welcomed with such affection by the leaders of (traditional) society practising *varṇāśrama*. Neither does the reason lie in his boldness in placing his feet on the heads of Brahmin boys who had become his disciples. That kind of act also is at present nothing new. For Brahmin boys, driven as they are by greed and attached as they are to the lure of earning money (which is the root of all evil), have given up their natural Brahminical spirit, forsaken their own occupation and started conducting themselves in forbidden ways. Thus, they are seen bowing their heads, time and again, at the feet of Ghoshes, Dasas, Senas and Guptas. Even though born in the highest rung of the caste hierarchy, they are not at all ashamed to embrace the discipleship of inferior castes. Swami Vivekananda has been admired like that because he has hoisted the banner of victory of the religion based on *varṇāśrama* in the civilized and advanced countries of the West. People here are firmly convinced that he has come back to his own country after establishing in all the Western countries the superiority of the religion based on *varṇāśrama*. Therefore he has to, with all his heart and with all efforts, strengthen that conviction.

Furthermore there is another consideration.

The Lord said,

‘Oh descendent of Bharata! Whenever there is a decline of virtue and rise of irreligion, I incarnate myself; for the saving of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and to protect religion, I am born in every age.’

But before declaring oneself as an incarnation on the authority of the above saying, care has to be taken to reveal the true nature of one’s religion. For even today only a handful of people in India know about the Master of the Swami, the revered Paramahansa Deva; there are many whose ears have not yet heard even his holy name. That is why his greatness, as also the eternal nature of the religion instructed by him, has to be proclaimed before the people by his worthy disciple; otherwise, to preach pure monism in India, the native land of Śaṅkarācārya, with its profusion of Vedantic treatises starting with the various Upanisads and Āranyakas, would be a pointless exercise indeed.

Moreover—

What is that religion which is beneficial to the Indians and whose protection necessitated the descent of God? What is its nature? What are the rites for its observance? Who are entitled to observe it? Who are they who are hostile to it? How do they behave? What is their nature? To which race do they belong? Who are they without whose extermination it will be impossible to preserve that religion? How long will this age last? At what time will a new age set in? Without an extensive exposition of these matters, the words of the Swami will be like crying in the wilderness—they will be an utter failure.

We know very well that in the Christian world, Lord Jesus had to incarnate himself for the preservation of true religion; it is easy to understand what kind of perversion would have set in in those lands without the arrival of a great man of that stature at that time and that place. In the same manner, the advent of Mohammed also occurred in accordance with the needs of his time and place. But after that a long time has passed; in none of those countries has there been an expectation of another incarnation or prophet. Many a great man of immaculate character, with his mind totally attuned to religion, has appeared there. But not one among them has declared himself an incarnation, nor have their countrymen acknowledged them as such after their passing away. Then why do we, at the present time, start this great movement in India about an Incarnation?

If, anyone who talks about religion after somehow tonsuring his head and taking to the ochre robe desires the status of an incarnation for himself, then, after some time, the number of incarnations would exceed that of ordinary people! That is why we raise the issues: what kind of religion would be truly beneficial to the Indians? what kind of obstacles have occurred in its way at present? who have created these obstacles? how can that religion be sustained further? Without dwelling on all these matters, to want to attain parity with God, merely through the demonstration of the fluency of one's oratorical skill, would call for as much ridicule as does the attempt of a dwarf who raises his arms to catch the moon.

If, for our country, the religion based on *varṇāśrama* (system of castes and stages of life) has any natural advantage, then the means for its preservation have been fully described by Bhagavan Sri Krishna himself, and therefore there is no need for another incarnation to uphold the same. On the contrary, if it is felt that some special new religion, which is bereft of discrimination on grounds of caste distinction, etc. and is based on the worship of one formless God, would be beneficial for the Indian people at the present time, surely then, many great souls—distinguished modern preceptors—who have instructed in that kind of religion, have been born before him. It will be downright improper not to accord to them the status of incarnations and (instead) imagine that some particular person who has followed their footsteps is an incarnation. We need not say anything more. □

Ay, for ages we have been saturated with awful jealousy; we are always getting jealous of each other. Why has this man a little precedence, and not I? Even in the worship of God we want precedence, to such a state of slavery have we come. This is to be avoided. If there is any crying sin in India at this time it is this slavery. Every one wants to command and no one wants to obey;... First learn to obey. The command will come by itself. Always first learn to be a servant, and then you will be fit to be a master. Avoid this jealousy and you will do great works that have yet to be done.

—Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda: His Return to India and the Founding of the Ramakrishna Mission

The following are extracts from the The Life of Swami Vivekananda, by His Eastern and Western Disciples, vol. 2. (See its pages between 162 and 255.) It describes in relevant detail the momentous events that occurred a hundred years ago—from the time of Swamiji's reaching Colombo to his giving a definite form to Sri Ramakrishna's Mission.

REACHING COLOMBO

In the early morning of January 15 [1897], the coast of Ceylon could be seen in the distance. It was a beautiful sight in the roseate hues of the rising sun. Gradually the harbour of Colombo with its majestic cocoa palms and its yellow-sanded beach came into view. This was India,¹ and the Swami was beside himself with excitement. But he was totally unaware that he was going to meet representatives of various religious sects and social bodies who had come to welcome him home.... and in Madras and Calcutta there was great excitement over his expected arrival.... He was to find that he had become India's 'national hero', and that his jubilant welcome in Ceylon was to be the first public ovation in a grand march of triumph from Colombo in the far south to Almora in the distant north.

The story of Swami Vivekananda's reception by his fellow-countrymen can be conveniently told in the words of eye-witnesses, such as Goodwin, and by quoting from newspaper reports. This is how the Colombo reception was reported by the local paper *Ceylon Independent*:

The fifteenth of January [1897] will be a memorable day in the annals of the Hindu Community of Colombo, being

the day on which the Swami Vivekananda, a teacher of wonderful abilities and attainments, a member of the most sacred Hindu spiritual Order, the sannyasins of India, was welcomed by them. His visit is an epoch-making one, heralding the dawn of an unprecedented spiritual activity.

As the day was closing and the night approached, when the auspicious and sacred hour of 'Sandhya' noted by the Hindu Shastras as the best suited for devotion came round as the harbinger of the coming great events of the day, the sage of noble figure, of sedate countenance with large, luminous eyes, arrived, dressed in the orange garb of a sannyasin, accompanied by the Swami Niranjanananda and others.... No words can describe the feelings of the vast masses and their expressions of love, when they saw the steam launch bearing the sage, steaming towards the jetty.... The din and clamour of shouts and hand-clapping drowned even the noise of the breaking waves

The Hon. Mr. P. Coomaraswamy stepped forward, followed by his brother, and received the Swami garlanding him with a beautiful jasmine wreath. Then came a rush.... No amount of physical force could hold back the great multitude.... The sage and his disciples took their seats amidst a shower of flowers. After silence was restored, a mu-

1. In those days, Ceylon, now known as Sri Lanka, was a part of British India.

sician played a charming air on his violin; then the sacred Tamil hymns, the 'Thevaram', two thousand years old, were sung; a Sanskrit hymn composed especially in the Swami's honour was also intoned. The Hon. Mr. P. Coomaraswamy, stepping forward, bowed to the Swami in oriental fashion and then read an address of welcome on behalf of the Hindus.

The Swami rose amidst deafening cheers and responded to the address in an eloquent and impressive style, peculiarly his own. The huge audience were carried away by his words, simple and plain though they were.

In the course of his reply he pointed out that the demonstration had not been made in honour of a great politician, or a great soldier, or a millionaire. 'The spirituality of the Hindus', he said, 'is revealed by the princely reception which they have given to a begging sannyasin. He was not a general, not a prince, not a wealthy man, yet men great in the transitory possessions of the world and much respected, had come to honour him, a

He urged the necessity of making religion the backbone of the national life, if the nation was to live; and disclaimed any personal character in the welcome he had received, insisting that it was but the recognition of a principle.

poor sannyasin. 'This', he said, 'is one of the highest expressions of spirituality.' He urged the necessity of making religion the backbone of the national life, if the nation was to live; and disclaimed any personal character in the welcome he had received, insisting that it was but the recognition of a principle....

This is how Goodwin, writing on 22

January 1897, described their reception at Colombo to Mrs. Bull:

We reached Colombo at 4 o'clock on Friday, January 15, and caught sight of a steam launch coming out with a sannyasi on board, who proved to be Swami Niranjanananda. There were also with him Mr. T.G. Harrison (an English Buddhist) and three native gentlemen (Tamil Hindus). It took us a long time to put ashore, but when we did, we found a dense crowd waiting, who cheered the Swami vociferously. The Swami then entered a carriage drawn by two horses, and with coachman and syces in gorgeous crimson livery. With him sat Hon. Mr. P. Coomaraswamy, member of the Legislative Council, and Mrs. Sevier. Mr. Sevier and I followed in another carriage.

We drove slowly through the city to the Cinnamon Gardens. There, in Barnes St., a new house, never before occupied, was placed at our disposal. I say 'our' because the Colombo Reception Committee, or Sabba [Sabha], included us in everything done for the Swami. The road leading up to the house for a quarter of a mile was beautifully decorated with palm branches, and with, at either end, a very beautiful triumphal arch of bamboo, and the words 'Welcome to Swami Vivekananda'. Flags and banners were everywhere. I should tell you that the procession was headed by the native band, tomtoms, etc., and the sacred umbrellas and banners brought out only when a god or idol is in procession, were also used. At the house an address was presented by Mr. Coomaraswamy and the Swami briefly replied. Then we had dinner and rest. All the meals were of native dishes.... A sannyasin is supposed to identify himself with Shiva, and in that sense becomes Shiva himself. The Swami is worshipped therefore as God Himself (and I may add that I myself

consider that they are perfectly right).

On the Saturday [January 16] evening the Swami lectured to a crowded audience. The report I have sent you. I did it myself, because the reporters here made an awful mess of it, but you will see that they made lots of mistakes in setting it up.... On Sunday the Swami went to the temple to be worshipped. We drove through the City and in the Tamil street had to stop at nearly fifty houses while the inhabitants (Hindus) placed garlands of flowers round the Swami's neck, mostly tuberose and jasmine, and sprinkled him with rose-water, also giving him fruit or bouquets of flowers. Then we reached the gate of the temple. We all got out and a procession was formed, headed by their band, all of us marching barefoot round the outside of the temple, but all the time within the temple precincts. I had to stay just outside of the temple, as Europeans are not allowed within, but I could see all that went on. As soon as the Swami entered, accompanied by the largest crowd ever seen at the temple, the people shouted, 'Jai Jai Mahadeva—All hail highest Deva', clapped their hands and cheered to the echo. More garlands and rose-water were given him, and he was offered sandalwood paste with which to touch the forehead between two eyes (representing the psychic eye).

I may mention, if you will pardon me, two things relating to myself which interested me very much. The people here, especially the intelligent classes, are very much pleased at seeing the Swami bring with him some English disciples. The consequence has been that the Seviers and I, but particularly myself, have come in for an enormous amount of attention. We are always sprinkled with rose-water and given sandalwood. One man wanted me to be photographed with the Swami so that he might worship me with

Swamiji.... Then again, outside the temple, I had a huge crowd round me, staring at me, and asking all sorts of questions about me.

REACHING INDIA

At the Swami's request arrangements were made to convey him and his party immediately to his native land. With the weather favourable, the voyage of about fifty miles was delightful. On Tuesday, January 26, about 3 p.m., the steamer carrying the Swami and his European disciples arrived in Pamban Roads. The Swami had been invited by the Raja of Ramnad to Rameswaram, and was about to land and proceed to that place when he heard that the Raja was coming in person to meet him at

The consequence has been that the Seviers and I, but particularly myself, have come in for an enormous amount of attention. We are always sprinkled with rose-water and given sandalwood. One man wanted me to be photographed with the Swami so that he might worship me with Swamiji....

Pamban. On the Raja's arrival, the Swami and party transferred from the vessel in which they had come to the state-boat. As soon as he entered it, the Raja and all his staff prostrated themselves before him.... When the state-boat reached the shore, he was given a tremendous ovation by the people of Pamban. Under a decorated pandal, an address of welcome was read and presented to him. The Raja added to this a brief personal welcome which was remarkable for its depth of feeling. Then the Swami gave a short reply, pointing out that the backbone of the Indian national life was neither politics nor military power, neither commercial supremacy nor mechanical genius, but religion and religion alone; that it was this that India alone could give to the world. He con-

cluded by thanking the people of Pamban for their kind reception, and expressed his gratitude to the Raja of Ramnad for all that he had done for him.

The meeting over, the Swami was seated in the state-carriage and driven towards the Raj bungalow, the Raja himself walking with his court officials. Then, at the Raja's command, the horses were unharnessed, and the people, with the Raja himself, drew the state-carriage through the town. For three days the Swami remained at Pamban, to everybody's delight. On the day following his arrival he paid a visit to the great temple of Rameswaram.

Standing there on the sacred ground of that famous temple of Shiva, he spoke on the significance of a place of pilgrimage, and the essential nature of worship, charging his eager listeners, and through them all his co-religionists, to worship Shiva not in images alone, but in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased. S. Nagalingam Pillai translated his words into Tamil. The Raja of Ramnad was beside himself with the spirit of the occasion, and the very next day fed and clothed thousands of poor people. To mark the place where the Swami first set foot on Indian soil after his triumph in the West, the Raja planned to erect a victory monument, forty feet in height, bearing the following inscription:

Satyameva Jayate

The monument erected by Bhaskara Sethupathi, the Raja of Ramnad, marks the sacred spot, where His Holiness Swami Vivekananda's blessed feet first trod on Indian soil, together with the Swami's English disciples, on His Holiness's return from the Western Hemisphere, where glorious and unprecedented success attended His Holiness's philanthropic labours to spread the religion of the Vedanta.

January 27, 1897

The short trip from Pamban to the mainland was made in the early morning and breakfast taken in one of the rest-houses provided by the Raja for wayfarers.... It was almost evening when **Ramnad** came in sight. The journey from the coast proper was made by bullock-cart; but on nearing Ramnad the Swami and party entered the state-boat, which bore them across one of those large tanks that abound in South India. Thus the reception at Ramnad took place on the shore of a lake, heightening the dramatic effect of the occasion.

After a short rest, he was led into the audience hall where many had gathered to hear his reply to their welcome. As he entered, the hall resounded with shouts of triumph and joy. The Raja opened the meeting with a speech in high praise of the Swami. His brother, Raja Dinakara Sethupathi, then read the address of welcome, which was presented in a massive, gold casket of exquisite workmanship.

The Swami began his reply with words that have taken their place in the history of India. To hear them spoken in his thrilling voice is not given to us, but even to read them, they have a thrilling quality:

The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking and a voice is coming to us—away back where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected as it were from peak to peak of the infinite Himalaya of knowledge, and of love, and of work, India, this motherland of ours—a voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the

almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.

Your Highness, and gentlemen of Ramnad, accept my heartfelt thanks....

Following this visit to the palace on Sunday evening (January 31), the Swami and party set out on their journey northwards at midnight.

Paramakkudi (or Paramagudi), reached by coach, was the first stopping-place. A demonstration on a large scale had been organized, thousands following the Swami in procession. In his reply to their address of welcome, he spoke in forceful words....

At Manamadurai, where the next halt was made, the Swami was taken in procession to a huge pandal under which, amid deafening shouts of enthusiasm, an address of welcome from the people of that place and of neighbouring Shivaganga was read....

Again the journey was resumed. It was one long triumphal progress. At Madurai, the ancient city of learning and temples and royal memories, the Swami was accommodated in the bungalow of the Raja of Ramnad. An address of welcome was presented to him in a velvet casket. In his reply he spoke of the religious revival going on in India. She had to steer a course between the fanaticism of orthodoxy and the soullessness of Europe-inspired social reform. She had to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials in finding her true course.

On the evening of February 2, the Swami entrained for Kumbakonam.... All along the way at each station where the train stopped, crowds of people had gathered to welcome him with intense enthusiasm. Even small villages sent representatives. Garlands of flowers and addresses of welcome were presented, and the people pressed about the train to have a glimpse of their hero. The Swami replied to their addresses in a few words.... At Trichinopoly (now Tiruchirapalli), at four in the morning there were over a thousand people on the

In his reply he spoke of the religious revival going on in India. She had to steer a course between the fanaticism of orthodoxy and the soullessness of Europe-inspired social reform. She had to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials in finding her true course.

platform to present him with an address. The Council of the National High School, Trichinopoly, and also the student population of the city, presented addresses. His replies had to be brief. At Tanjore (or Thanjavur), another large demonstration had been arranged.

When the Swami was received at Kumbakonam, the people's rejoicing knew no bounds. The Hindu community and, separately, the Hindu students of the town, presented addresses of welcome. In reply the Swami spoke on 'The Mission of the Vedanta'. It was the first of those full-length calls to the nation, still unique in Indian History: unrivalled for their quality of thought, intensity of passion, and beauty of rhetoric.

An incident took place at Kumbakonam which has recently come to light. It will be remembered that, when the Swami was in Madras in 1893, he dreamt that his

mother had died. He became anxious on that account. Alasinga and Manmathanath Bhat-tacharya took him to a man called Govinda Chetti, who had power over ghosts. This man relieved the Swami of anxiety by assuring him that his mother was alive and well. That was four years ago. Now, when the Swami was being welcomed by the people of Kumbakonam, he recognized Govinda Chetti in the crowd, and asked him to meet him later. When the ghost charmer came, the Swami said: 'I know you have psychic power. It has given you money and honour; but from the spiritual point of view, are you not where you started? Has your mind progressed towards God?' The man replied, 'No, it has not progressed.' Then the Swami said to him: 'If that has not happened, what have you gained by this psychic power? Once you taste the bliss of God, you will see

place at a small railway station some miles from Madras. Many people had assembled there to get a glimpse of the 'Great Teacher' and pay their homage to him. The train, a 'through' train, was not to stop at that station. The crowds importuned the station-master to flag the train to a stop, if only for a few minutes, but to no avail. At last, seeing the train coming in the distance, hundreds of people lay flat on the railway line, determined to stop the train. The station-master was in a panic. However, the train came to a halt. People crowded round the Swami's carriage, sending forth shouts of triumph in his honour. Visibly moved by this expression of feeling, he appeared before them for a few moments. He thanked them with all his heart, and extended his hands in blessing.

The crowds importuned the station-master to flag the train to a stop, if only for a few minutes, but to no avail. At last, seeing the train coming in the distance, hundreds of people lay flat on the railway line, determined to stop the train. The station-master was in a panic. However, the train came to a halt.

that all these things are nothing.' Saying this the Swami embraced him. To everybody's astonishment, the man's psychic powers disappeared from that day, and in their place came tremendous hankering for God, as a result of which he renounced the world.

On the way from Kumbakonam to Madras the Swami met with the same enthusiastic welcome. At **Mayavaram** (Mayuram) people gathered in large numbers, filling the whole of the station platform....

An incident which speaks volumes for the adoration that the Swami had aroused in the hearts of the millions of South India, took

Great enthusiasm prevailed in **Madras** and its environs for weeks over the homecoming of Swami Vivekananda. A Vivekananda Reception Committee was organized some time in the first week of January, with the Hon'ble Justice Subrahmanya Iyer as head.... The railway station and streets were lavishly decorated, and seventeen triumphal arches erected. Mottoes were blazoned on all sides: 'Long Live the Venerable Vivekananda!' 'Hail, Servant of God!' 'Hail, Servant of all Great Sages of the Past!' 'Hearty Greetings of Awakened India!' 'Greetings to Swami Vivekananda!' 'Hail, Harbinger of Peace!' 'Hail, Shri Ramakrishna's Worthy Son!' 'Welcome, Prince of Men!' And in Sanskrit: 'Ekam Sad Vipra Bahudha Vadanti!'...

On the eve of the Swami's arrival the *Madras Times* had this to say:

For the past few weeks the Hindu public of Madras have been most anxiously expecting the arrival of Swami Vivekananda, the great Hindu Monk of world-wide fame. At the present moment his name is on everybody's lips. In

the schools, in the colleges, in the High Court, on the Marina, and in the streets and bazaars of Madras, hundreds of eager persons may be seen asking everybody, 'When will the Swami Vivekananda come?' Large numbers of students from the mofussil, who have come up for the university examinations, are staying here awaiting the Swami, and increasing their hostelry bills, despite the urgent call of their parents to return home immediately for the holidays.

From the nature of the receptions received elsewhere in this Presidency, from the preparations being made here, from the triumphal arches erected at Castle Kernan, where the 'Prophet' is to be lodged at the cost of the Hindu public, and from the interest taken in the movement by the leading Hindu gentlemen of this city, like the Hon. Mr. Justice Subrahmanya Iyer, there is no doubt that the Swami will have a grand reception.... He will always be remembered as the first Hindu sannyasin who dared to cross the sea to carry to the West the message of what he believes in as a religious peace....

Speaking of the intense enthusiasm that characterized the reception, one must not omit to notice a humble contribution from a venerable-looking old lady, who pushed her way to the Swami's carriage through the dense crowds, in order to see him, that she might thereby be enabled, according to her belief, to wash off her sins as she regarded him as an Incarnation of Sambandha Moorthy [a Shaiva saint of Tamil Nadu]. We make special mention of this to show with what feeling of piety and devotion His Holiness was received this morning, and, indeed, in Chintadripet and elsewhere, camphor offerings were made to him, and at the place where he is encamped, the ladies of the household received him with Arati, or the ceremony of waving

lights, incense, and flowers as before an image of God....

Afterwards there were to be four public lectures devoted to his message to the world and to India, and to the means of building up a national spiritual life in India suited to altered conditions. The following subjects were chosen: (1) 'My Plan of Campaign', (2) 'The Sages of India', (3) 'Vedanta in its Application to Indian Life', (4) 'The Future of India'. At Alasinga's request, the Swami also consented to deliver a lecture at the Triplicane Literary Society on 'The Work Before Us'; and there were to be two morning sessions at the Castle when people could put questions to him.

This gives little idea of how arduous and fully occupied a time the Swami's stay in Madras was for him....

Meanwhile the Swami was receiving letters from his Western disciples and from the Vedanta Societies in America and England, informing him of the progress of the work and congratulating him on his successful preaching there. He received also addresses or appreciative communications from societies or other groups of admirers in the West. That from the members of the Cambridge Conferences was signed by some of the most distinguished minds in the history of American thought. It ran as follows:

TO SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, INDIA

Dear Friend and Brother,

As members of the Cambridge Conferences, devoted to comparative study in Ethics, Philosophy, and Religion, it gives us great pleasure to recognize the value of your able expositions of the Philosophy and Religion of Vedanta in America and the interest created thereby among thinking people. We believe such

expositions as have been given by yourself and your co-labourer, the Swami Saradananda, have more than mere speculative interest and utility, that they are of great ethical value in cementing the ties of friendship and brotherhood between distant peoples, and in helping us to realize that solidarity of human relationships and interests which has been affirmed by all the great religions of the world.

We earnestly hope that your work in India may be blessed in further promoting this noble end, and that you may return to us again with assurances of fraternal regard from our distant brothers of the great Aryan Family, and the ripe wisdom that comes from reflection and added experience and further contact with the life and thought of your people.

...It is our hope that you will be able to return to us, in which event we can assure you the cordial greetings of old friends and the certainty of continued and increasing interest in your work.

We remain,
Cordially and Fraternally yours,

Lewis G. Janes, D.D., Director	J.E. Lough
C.C. Everett, D.D.	A.O. Lovejoy
William James	Rachel Kent Taylor
John H. Wright	Sara C. Bull
Josiah Royce	John P. Fox

A letter also addressed to 'Our Indian Brethren' was received from Miss Mary Phillips, the Secretary of the Vedanta Society of New York. It read:

Dear Friends:

The Western Aryans send cordial greetings to the Aryans of India.

We, in New York, who have been so fortunate as to hear the Vedanta Philosophy taught by the Swami Vivekananda, are desirous of expressing to you in some

small measure our grateful recognition of his services to us.

He came, a stranger, unheralded, but, by the force of his magnetic eloquence, and the purity of his personal character, he commanded the attention and interest of thousands, and attracted their minds to the study of a subject almost entirely unknown to them. Here, in New York, where he taught and lectured for two seasons, the impression he produced is so deep that we hope and trust it will extend until the Vedanta Philosophy shall take permanent root among us, and its comprehensive and tolerant teachings shall find lodgement in hearts, and expression in the lives of large numbers of our people. We who came into more immediate contact with him, are deeply

We earnestly hope that your work in India may be blessed in further promoting this noble end, and that you may return to us again with assurances of fraternal regard from our distant brothers of the great Aryan Family, and the ripe wisdom that comes from reflection and added experience and further contact with the life and thought of your people.

grateful for the noble work he did among us,...

We wish to extend to you, his fellow-countrymen, our heartfelt sympathy in your present afflictions, with an earnest hope that a way may be found to lighten them.

May the Swami Vivekananda's work among his own people be blessed a thousandfold, and meet with the fullest measure of success. Should he return to us in the years to come, he will receive a most cordial welcome. He has made us feel that we are all of one kind, and all expressions of that One Existence which

is the background of the Universe.

MARY A. PHILLIPS
Secretary

The Swami received invitations to visit other cities in India. He was invited to Poona [now Pune] by B.G. Tilak; but he wrote to Swami Brahmananda on February 12: 'I had to give up invitations from Poona and other places on account of bad health. I am very much pulled down by hard work and heat.'

He came, a stranger, unheralded, but, by the force of his magnetic eloquence, and the purity of his personal character, he commanded the attention and interest of thousands, and attracted their minds to the study of a subject almost entirely unknown to themthe impression he produced is so deep that we hope and trust it will extend until the Vedanta Philosophy shall take permanent root among us...

The Swami wanted rest. He was pining for the Himalayas. So he decided to leave directly for Calcutta by steamer.

On Monday February 15, he embarked on S.S. *Mombasa* of the B.I.N.S. Company....

The whole of Bengal had been alive with enthusiasm ever since the news flashed that Swami Vivekananda had landed in India. Calcutta in particular was following with intense interest the Swami's triumphal progress from Colombo to Madras, and attentive to reports of his utterances.... In the last week of January 1897 a preliminary meeting was called at the residence of Raja Benoy Krishna Deb Bahadur to organize an influential Reception Committee to accord a fitting reception to the Swami on his return to Calcutta and to present him with an address of welcome....

The Swami too was eagerly looking forward to his return to the city of his birth....

The Reception Committee in Calcutta had been busy making elaborate preparations for the Swami's arrival following news of his departure from Madras. The route from Sealdah railway station to Ripon College in Harrison Road (now Mahatma Gandhi Road), half a mile long, was colourfully festooned on both sides. A triumphal arch, surmounted by a Nahabatkhana, was put up on Circular Road, just outside the station, having on it the words, 'Hail, Swamiji'. Another arch, with 'Jai Ramakrishna', spanned Harrison Road; and a third, with 'Welcome' on it, was put up in front of Ripon College. Two persons had been sent by the Reception Committee to meet the Swami and party when the ship anchored off Budge Budge, and inform them of the reception programme.

S.S. *Mombasa* reached **Budge Budge** at night, and early the following morning, Friday, February 19, the Swami boarded a special train for **Sealdah**.... Sealdah Station had a festive appearance. A crowd of about 20,000, consisting of men of all ages and stations of life, were gathered there from early morning.... The *Indian Mirror's* report of the reception ran as follows:

Precisely at half-past seven the special train conveying the Swami and his few European and Indian friends, steamed onto the platform. There was a great enthusiasm displayed on all sides, and everybody was anxious to get near him to have a look of the 'hero' of the day. There was a great rush on the spacious platform and one could with difficulty keep his place.... As soon as the Swami alighted from the train the members of the Reception Committee, headed by Babu Narendranath Sen, stepped forward and conducted the Swami to a

phaeton. A European lady and a gentleman, who accompanied the Swami, were escorted to the carriage. The Swami and his friends and disciples were garlanded and were heartily cheered when the phaeton slowly drove amidst the cheers of the enthusiastic throng...

The Hon'ble Charu Chunder Mitter conducted the Swami and his friends to the Ripon College, where several respectable gentlemen followed them. There was a peculiar smile in the beaming countenance of the Swami, and his picturesque orange cloth fitted him admirably. He modestly bowed to the crowd, when they saluted him, and throughout evinced a simple and touching recognition of the unprecedented reception. At quarter to 8, he was escorted to the Ripon College and the crowd there was so great that it was impossible to get into the Hall. The Hon'ble Ananda Charlu and several respectable gentlemen were there.... In the spacious tent-yard of the Ripon College, the Swami and his friends were seated and the whole assembly cheered him heartily. Everybody expected the Swami to make a grand speech, but the Swami was evidently moved by the genuine and hearty reception of his countrymen, and, in a few chosen words, thanked the assembly for welcoming him in such a grand manner. The Swami and his friends were then conducted by Babu Pashupatinath Bose, and they were entertained...at his house in **Baghbazar**. The Swami's European friends would reside in Babu Gopallal Seal's garden-house in Cossipore. The Swami, we understand, will return to his old Math in Baranagar [actually **Alambazar**].

The *Statesman and Friend of India* and other papers reported that some of the young men in the welcoming crowd unyoked the horses of the Swami's carriage and drew it themselves along the whole way to the Ripon College.

Swami Virajananda, a disciple of the Swami, says:

At that time the colour of Swamiji's body was fair. There was a brilliant lustre on his face.... During the day Swamiji used to be at Gopallal Seals's house at Cossipore, and in the evening he used to walk the whole distance to the Math with his friends and disciples. After coming to the Math, he would remove his clothing and wear only a loin-cloth. Sometimes if it was too late at night, he would spend the night at the Seals' house. There, many people would come to see and talk with Swamiji; and when he came to the Math, there was also no end of talking....

Among the Swami's triumphs was the conversion of his brother-disciples from an individualistic idea of religious life to one in which concern for others and service to them occupied a prominent place. Up to this time the ideal of the monks of the Math had been to strive for their own Self-realization and Mukti by means of meditation and severe

There was a great enthusiasm displayed on all sides, and everybody was anxious to get near him to have a look of the 'hero' of the day. There was a great rush on the spacious platform and one could with difficulty keep his place....

penance, and by remaining as much as possible aloof from the world. This was, according to the prevailing Hindu idea, sanctioned by tradition and the sages since Vedic times. But with the return of the Swami a new order of things was inaugurated. He reproved them—as he had again and again in his letters from the West—for their lack of faith in themselves and in the mission of their Master, for their failure to organize themselves into an active body, and for their neglect of teaching and preaching. Each one of them was a spiritual lion, he told them,

capable of moving the world, if he but unfolded his latent power. The time demanded that they carry the new light to others, that they themselves show by their example how

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to serve the poor, the helpless, and the diseased, seeing God in them, and that they inspire people to do the same. The mission of his life, he said, was to create an order of sannyasins in India who would dedicate their lives for others.

...He interpreted his Master's message in a new light, showing them that their supreme duty lay in carrying on the Master's mission. They were to raise the condition of the masses through service, and bring about a religious renewal by scattering the life-giving ideas of the Master over the world. That was the mission entrusted to them under his, the Swami's, leadership by Shri Ramakrishna....

Knowing that it would be better to follow the doctors' advice, the Swami for the time being left off work in Calcutta and dropped plans for visits to other parts of India. On March 8 he went to Darjeeling....

The Swami...returned to Calcutta on March 21 by the Darjeeling Mail....

FOUNDING OF

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

We have already noted the Swami's intention to start an organization for service on all levels from the spiritual to the mate-

rial—service in which monks, devotees, and general public would co-operate. Accordingly, on his return from Darjeeling he called a meeting of all the monastic and lay disciples of Shri Ramakrishna. It took place at 3 p.m., on Saturday, 1 May 1897, at Balarambabu's house. When all had assembled, the Swami opened the meeting with the following words in Bengali:

From my travels in various countries I have come to the conclusion that without organization nothing great and permanent can be done. But in a country like India, at our present stage of development, it does not seem to me well advised to start an organization on a democratic basis in which every member has an equal voice, and decisions are arrived at by a majority of the votes of the community. With the West the case is different.... Among us also, when with the spread of education we learn to sacrifice, to stand above our individual interests and concerns, for the good of the community or the nation at large, then it will be possible to work on a democratic basis. Taking this into consideration, we should have for our organization at present a Director whose orders everyone should obey. Then, in the fullness of time, it will be guided by the opinions and consent of the members.

This Association will bear the name of him in whose name we have become sannyasins; him, taking whom as your ideal you are leading the householder life in the field of activity—this Samsara (this world)—; him whose holy name, and the influence of whose unique life and teachings, have within twelve years of his demise spread in such an unthought-of way both in the East and the West. Let this Sangha (Organization) therefore be named the Ramakrishna Mission. We are but the servants of the Master. May you all help in this work!

The proposal was enthusiastically supported by all the householder disciples. There was discussion about the future method of work. In this meeting on May 1 the Ramakrishna Mission Association was established, and at a second meeting on May 5 resolutions were passed laying down the main principles by which the movement was to be guided, and its aims and objects. As originally drawn up, these were as follows:

This Association (Sangha) shall be known as the Ramakrishna Mission.

The aim of the Sangha is to preach those truths which Shri Ramakrishna has, for the good of humanity, preached and demonstrated by practical application in his own life, and to help others to put these truths into practice in their lives for their temporal, mental, and spiritual advancement.

The duty of the Mission is to conduct in the right spirit the activities of the movement inaugurated by Shri Ramakrishna for the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions, knowing them all to be so many forms only of one undying Eternal Religion.

Its Methods of Action are:

(a) To train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses;

(b) to promote and encourage arts and industries; and

(c) to introduce and spread among the people in general Vedantic and other religious ideas in the way in which they were elucidated in the life of Shri Ramakrishna.

Indian Work Department:

The activities of the Mission should be directed to the establishment of Maths and Ashramas in different parts of India for the training of sannyasins and such of the

householders as may be willing to devote their lives to educate others, and to the finding of the means by which they would be enabled to educate the people, by moving about from one province to another.

Its work in the *Foreign Department* should be to send trained members of the Order to countries outside India to start centres there for the preaching of Vedanta in order to bring about a closer relation and better understanding between India and foreign countries.

The aims and ideals of the Mission being purely spiritual and humanitarian, it shall have no connection with politics.

Any one who believes in the mission of Shri Ramakrishna, or who sympathizes or is willing to co-operate with the above-mentioned aims and objects of the Association, is eligible for membership.

When the meeting had broken up and most of the lay members had departed, the Swami said to Swami Yogananda: 'So the work has now begun in this way. Let us see how it succeeds, by the will of Shri Ramakrishna.'

Swami Yogananda: 'You are doing these things by Western methods. Would you say that Shri Ramakrishna left us any such instructions?'

The Swami: 'How do you know that these methods are not in keeping with his ideas? Shri Ramakrishna was the embodiment of infinite ideas: do you want to shut him up in your own limits? I shall break those limits and scatter his ideas broadcast all over the world. He never instructed me to introduce worship of him, and so forth. The methods of spiritual practice, concentration and meditation, and the other higher ideals of religion that he taught—those we

must realize and teach to all men. Infinite are the ideas and infinite are the paths that lead to the Goal. I was not born to create a new sect in this world, too full of sects already. Blessed are we that we have found refuge at the feet of our Master. It is our duty to give the ideas entrusted to us freely to the whole world.'

On another occasion, after that of the above conversation with Swami Yogananda, when the Swami was staying at Balarambabu's house, he was talking in a light mood with some of his brother-monks and with some lay disciples of the Master. At such times he would be full of wit and jokes. Swami Adbhutananda was taking him to task for not preaching the ideas of Shri Ramakrishna, and was challenging him to prove how his plans could be reconciled

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with the latter's teachings. Shri Ramakrishna insisted, above all, on Bhakti and on the practice of Sadhana for the realization of God; while the Swami, Adbhutananda pointed out, was constantly urging them to go about preaching, and serving the poor and the diseased—those things that turned the mind outward, which was the great impediment to Sadhana. Then again, the Swami's idea of starting Maths and Homes of Service for the public good, his ideas of organization and of patriotism, which were undoubtedly Western in conception, his efforts to create a new type of sannyasi with a broader ideal of renunciation, and other ideas similar in spirit, were incompatible with Shri Ramakrishna's ideal of renunciation and would surely have been repudiated

by him.

The Swami at first took these observations of Swami Adbhutananda lightly and retorted jokingly, saying: 'What do you know? You are an ignorant man. You are indeed a fit disciple of Shri Ramakrishna! Like guru like chela! Your education ended with 'Ka', the first letter of the alphabet, like that of Prahlada. Being reminded by 'Ka' of Krishna, he could not proceed further. You are Bhaktas, in other words, sentimental fools! What do you understand of religion? You are babies. You are only good at praying with folded hands: "O Lord! how beautiful Your nose is, how sweet Your eyes are", and such nonsense. And you think your salvation is secured, that Shri Ramakrishna will come at the final hour and take you up by the hand to the highest heaven! Study, public preaching, and doing humanitarian works are, according to you, Maya, because Shri Ramakrishna did not do them himself, because he said to someone, "Seek and find God first; doing good to the world is presumptuous!" As if God-realization is such an easy thing to achieve! As if He is such a fool as to make himself a plaything in the hands of an imbecile!

'You think you understand Shri Ramakrishna better than myself! You think Jnana is dry knowledge to be attained by a desert path, killing out the tenderest faculties of the heart. Your Bhakti is sentimental nonsense which makes one impotent. You want to preach Ramakrishna as you have understood him, which is mighty little. Hands off! Who cares for your Ramakrishna? Who cares for your Bhakti and Mukti? Who cares what the scriptures say? I will go to hell cheerfully a thousand times, if I can rouse my countrymen, immersed in Tamas (inertia), and make them stand on their own feet and be Men, inspired with the spirit of Karma-Yoga. I am not a follower of Ramakrishna or any one; I am a follower of

him only who carries out my plans! I am not a servant of Ramakrishna or any one, but of him only who serves and helps others, without caring for his own Mukti.'

The Swami's voice became choked, his frame shook with intense emotion. He could not contain himself any longer. Tears streamed from his eyes. In a flash he was on his feet and ran from the room to his sleeping apartment. His brother-disciples were seized with fear and repented of their criticisms spoken to him in that strain. A few of

feet, I give them a hard knock and make myself adamant by bringing up austere Jnana. Oh, I have work to do! I am a slave of Ramakrishna, who left his work to be done by me, and will not give me rest till I have finished it! And, oh, how shall I speak of him! Oh, his love for me!

Swami Yogananda and others, fearing a return of his devotional fervour, asked him whether he would not like an evening stroll on the roof, since it was so warm in the room. They took him up there and diverted his

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them went to his room some minutes later. Entering quietly, they found him sitting in meditation, his body stiff, tears flowing down his half-closed eyes, and body-hair standing on end. It seemed to them that he was absorbed in Bhava-samadhi. After nearly an hour he rose, washed his face, and came out to those waiting in the sitting-room. The atmosphere was tense.

At length the Swami broke the silence saying: 'When one attains Bhakti, one's heart and nerves become so soft and delicate that they cannot bear even the touch of a flower! Do you know that I cannot even read a novel nowadays! I cannot think or talk of Shri Ramakrishna long, without being overwhelmed. So I am trying and trying always to keep down the rush of Bhakti welling within me. I am trying to bind and bind myself with the iron chain of Jnana, for still my work to my motherland is unfinished, and my message to the world not yet fully delivered. So, as soon as I find that Bhakti feelings are coming up to sweep me off my

mind with ordinary conversation, till it was far into the night, and he was his normal self again.

The first general meeting of the members of the Ramakrishna Mission Association was held on Sunday, 9 May 1897, at Balarambabu's house, with Swami Brahmananda presiding. For the first three years the Association held its meetings there, in Bagh-bazar. Whenever the Swami was in Calcutta, he attended and, to the delight of all present, spoke and sang.

For some time the preaching and philanthropic work was carried on through this Association. In 1899, however, the Swami moved the Math to Belur, and, in 1901, by Deed of Trust, made over its management to Trustees. The main objects of the Math were the training of monks for Self-realization and for service of the world in all possible ways. Soon after this, the Ramakrishna Mission Association ceased to function as an independent organization, and the Math

authorities carried on the activities conducted by it.

In the course of time, as the scope of the Math's activities and its responsibilities grew, it was felt that, for the sake of efficiency, and to have a legal status, there should be a separate organization known as the Ramakrishna Mission. Accordingly, in 1909, a society named the Ramakrishna Mission was registered under Act XXI of 1860. The law required certain changes in the rules and regulations of the Mission Association; but most of these changes related to matters of administration. The principles and objects as originally laid down by the Swami remained the same. The management of the Ramakrishna Mission was vested in a Governing Body consisting of the Trustees of the Belur Math for the time being. The Mission was established and registered so that the purely Math activities, namely, the training and maintenance of a band of sannyasis to carry on religious work, could be kept distinct from the charitable activities which the Mission was to organize.

In due course, branch Maths sprang up in different parts of the country. These branch Maths and the Math at Belur have, from their inception, been parts of a single organization. The Ramakrishna Mission extended its activities also, and the various institutions that had already been started in different parts of India were gradually incorporated into the Ramakrishna Mission. New centres were also started.

Though the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math with their respective centres are distinct institutions, there is close association between them, since the Governing Body of the Mission consists of the Trustees of the Math, and the principal workers of the Mission are monks of the Math. Both have their headquarters at Belur Math; but their funds and accounts are separate. □

Sometime in 1912, a son² of hers [Sarada Devi's] represented that, according to some it was not befitting a monk's life to run hospitals, sell books, keep accounts, etc.; that the Master had done no such thing; that if anyone was in need of engagements, he should have recourse to such practices as worship, *japa*, meditation, and singing the Lord's name, as all other works would deflect the mind from God. Having heard it all through, the Mother said finally, 'If you don't work, with what will you occupy yourself day and night? Is it possible to meditate and make *japa* all the twenty-four hours? They refer to the Master! He is an exception, and Mathur supplied him his dainty dishes. You get your food just because you have engaged yourself in some work here. Otherwise would you not be moving from door to door for a morsel of rice? Everything shall go on as the Master ordains. The Math will run as it is doing now. Those who can't put up with this will clear out.'

During her stay at Banaras that same year, the Mother remarked while visiting a widow's home managed by the local Ramakrishna Mission, 'By serving these helpless old women one serves Nārāyaṇa (God) Himself. Ah! What a fine piece of work these boys are doing!' And about this same institution she said on another occasion, 'All this is His wish, my daughter!² He knows best how He is getting His plan executed and through what.' * □

2. The terms 'son' and 'daughter' are used to denote a disciple.

* These last two paragraphs are from Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, by Swami Gambhirananda, p. 336 (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004; 1977).

'The Conquering Hero Comes'

SWAMI SUNIRMALANANDA

This is a beautiful and fairly detailed narrative of the reception that Swami Vivekananda received upon his first triumphant return to the Indian sub-continent through Ceylon and South India. Though the preceding article/extract also deals with this theme, here the author has added some further details he painstakingly culled from the famous well-researched work (in Bengali) by Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu, 'Swami Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatvarsha' (Swami Vivekananda and Contemporary India), besides some material from the Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples.

The author, a member of the Ramakrishna Order, resides at Belur Math.

I

What a long wait it had been! Not one or a hundred but a thousand years. 'The messiah will come!' But when? Joel prophesied in the Old Testament: 'Fear not, O Land! Be glad and rejoice; for the Lord will do great things.' Such prophecies were here also. But the reality was what it was—a thousand years of tyranny, bloodshed, ruthless rule, and untold misery. 'When will the deliverer come?' was the constant question. Now at long last come he did, and how gloriously! For, this time he came not for the sake of this nation or that nation, but for all peoples and all cultures—for the poor and more for the selfish rich; for the fallen and more for the narrow-minded pious; for the ignorant and more for the proud learned; for the weak and more for the tyrannical strong.

The news came. He was returning. The subcontinent was thrilled. Nineteen December 1896. Early morning. Millions all over India read either in the *Indian Mirror* or *The Bengalee* or the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*: 'We understand that Swami Vivekananda leaves England for India after Christmas.'

Vivekananda! What a growth! Born as Narendranath of affluent parents; but suffers abject poverty in his adult life; comes to

Sri Ramakrishna, the creator of prophets, in search of God; realizes the supreme Goal of life through ardent spiritual practice; matures further and learns the greatest Truth that the human being is the best manifestation of God, and therefore to serve humanity is to serve God; feels that he has a mission in life to fulfil; embraces monasticism and wanders all over India to see for himself the sunken condition of his motherland's 'divinities on earth'; and sails over to the West to represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions, Chicago, and to bring help to his country's masses. And now, after winning over the Western hearts, he was returning triumphantly. When he went, apart from his Calcutta associates and Madras disciples, a few kings and some laymen knew him. That was all. Today, he was the talk of the whole sub-continent—his name was a household word!

The news of Swami Vivekananda's imminent arrival having burst upon society, the country was roused to intense activity. The 'sleeping leviathan', as Swamiji once called it, awoke with a start from what was indeed a deep and long collective sleep. Preparations were on at great speed. Formation of committees, holding meetings, passing resolutions, fund-raising, readying wel-

come-addresses, printing pamphlets, and so on—were all taken up in quick succession. Several newspapers too helped in keeping the nation regularly informed of the preparations being made to receive Swamiji.

Let us pause here for just a moment. Forget for a while that you are in the 20th century. Take your mind back to the nineteenth century India. Picture the India then—a dependent nation, where everybody lived in fear and subjection, where poverty and illiteracy was rampant, where every kind of independent native 'organiza-

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tion' was suspect, and, over and above these, where there was only jeering if any Indian strove to walk tall and free. Put briefly, India then was a slave nation. It was under such demeaning circumstances that what you will now read further really happened, unbelievably, and that to a monk—neither to a king, nor to a warrior, nor even to a political luminary.

Swami Vivekananda, accompanied by his Western admirers—J.J. Goodwin, and Captain and Mrs. Sevier, was to arrive at Colombo on 15 January 1897. Under the presidentship of Honourable P. Coomaraswamy, a committee had been formed to receive Swamiji. The other members of the committee were Solicitor General Rama Ratnam and Registrar General, Arunachalam. During the very first committee meeting a good amount of money was collected. Plans for the reception were chalked out. By 14th January, the whole of Colombo wore a fes-

tive look. All the streets were cleaned and well decorated using plantain trees, palm leaves, mango leaves, flowers and auspicious water-filled pitchers. Barnes Street, the most important street of Colombo, had been converted into a royal road. Every house stood well adorned with flowers. Besides, flowers were strewn everywhere and welcome arches erected at regular intervals.

It was evening, the 15th of January, 1897. The ocean was sending one eager wave after another to the beach, excitedly announcing, as it were, that Swamiji's ship was nearing the jetty. At least ten thousand people had assembled in the area, from the beach where he was to be received to Barnes Street. No sooner had Swamiji's ship arrived than the joy of the people overflowed its bounds. Their shoutings and clappings rent the air and easily drowned the roar of the ocean. Coomaraswamy and his friends went in a steam launch to bring Swamiji to the jetty. They received him cordially and prostrated at his feet. Swamiji came out and stood there, waving at the crowd. In his ochre robes, with the vast ocean in the background, Swamiji indeed shone like the sun. The crowd became delirious. Who could control the sea of human beings? Thousands of caps, turbans and handkerchiefs were waved at Swamiji while everyone shouted, 'Glory unto you!' Swamiji waved his hand too and the people surged forward. A near stampede ensued.

Swamiji soon got down from the launch and was taken in a chariot drawn by two white horses, moving slowly along the Barnes Street. Swamiji's brother monk, Swami Niranjanananda, who had come all the way from Calcutta to receive him, was with Swamiji. As the chariot moved towards the first and main pandal, the people walked alongside. Flower petals were strewn. When Swamiji reached the entrance, he was given a traditional welcome, which included offer-

ing him a white umbrella, garlanding, putting *tilak* on his forehead and so on, while melodious songs of traditional music were played.

The distance from the first pandal to the second was not much. White cotton sheet had been spread on the street. Swamiji

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walked the distance to the joy of everyone. Thousands of people on both sides waved and cheered. This pandal, more glorious than the first, was at the Cinnamon Gardens where a newly built house was kept for Swamiji's use. Swamiji entered the pandal, and instantly an artificial lotus bloomed, and from inside it flew up a beautiful bird. There were torches burning everywhere. Owing to the tremendous pressure of the crowd, a few decorations gave way. Swamiji sat down on a throne set up for him and received a shower of flower petals. Then the three thousand year old song, 'Thevaram', was sung. Next, Coomaraswamy saluted Swamiji and read out the welcome-address, which said in part:

...You have proclaimed to the nations of Europe and America the Hindu ideal of a universal religion, harmonizing all creeds, providing spiritual food for each soul according to its needs.... By your noble work and example, you have laid humanity under an obligation difficult to repay...

Swamiji got up and replied to the address, the gist of which was that the spiritu-

ality of the Hindus was revealed in the princely reception which they—one and all—gave him, an ordinary sannyasin. After the function ended, Swamiji and the disciples entered the new house meant for them, had dinner and then rest.

On 16th January, Saturday evening, Swamiji addressed a large gathering, after a beautiful welcome ceremony, at the Floral Hall, Colombo. Here Swamiji spoke about the greatness of India from a historical perspective. He also described how in India religion came first and all other things later. The general theme of the Indian religion is 'Truth is One and sages call It by different names', said Swamiji and emphasized the point.

On Sunday, 17th January 1897, Swamiji visited the famous Shiva temple at Colombo. It was crowded there, as usual. The party drove in horse-drawn vehicles along the Tamil Street, stopping in front of innumerable houses to receive puja (ceremonial reverence) from the devotees. At every house, Swamiji was garlanded, a sacred mark put on his forehead, and rosewater sprinkled on him. As Goodwin wrote later to an American devotee, expressing his own conviction, Swamiji was worshipped there as Shiva himself.

The party reached the temple gate and a procession was formed. To the accompaniment of temple's traditional music, they all walked barefoot round the temple. After being accorded full temple honours, Swamiji entered the temple. The crowd that had assembled shouted, 'Jai, jai, Mahadeva'. Swamiji had the *darshan* of Lord Shiva, took the sanctified flowers, etc. and left. Even after returning to his quarters, there was a stream of visitors—dignitaries, pandits and laymen. That day he had to speak with some brahmin pandits and the talk went on till about two in the morning!

On 18th January, Monday, Swamiji visited the house of Mr. Chellaiah, who was a prominent citizen of Sri Lanka. While on his way to Chellaiah's house, people standing on both sides showered hi with flowers and garlands. The news that Swamiji was coming had brought thousands to the place. Chellaiah's house and the surrounding area had been beautifully decorated. Inside the house Swamiji noticed a picture of Sri Ramakrishna, and instantly saluted him.

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Songs were sung and refreshments served. Later, in the evening, Swamiji gave a lengthy talk on Advaita in the Public Hall of Colombo.

Swamiji had planned to sail to Madras as soon as possible. But despite numerous invitations and telegrams from different parts of Sri Lanka, he decided to visit Kandy and Jaffna. As planned, Swamiji was to be at Jaffna on 20th January. Therefore, against the wishes of everyone present, he started with his companions for Kandy by a special train on the 19th. It was a tearful farewell by the people of Colombo. The railway station was full of people. There is no known record in the history of Sri Lanka of a native in general or a monk in particular being ever given such a rousing reception or such a sorrowful farewell.

At the Kandy railway station too, the platform was full of eager people. He was given a warm welcome by the local citizens,

and then taken to a bungalow for rest; later he spoke in response to the welcome.

Swamiji and party started for Jaffna on the 20th. Two hundred miles by coach would take the party to that northern tip of Ceylon. Unfortunately, there was an accident on the way. One of the wheels of the coach broke, and group had to suffer much owing to the lack of an alternative transport. After a long wait on the road itself, they managed to get a bullock car for the women. The men had to walk over 18 miles. The party somehow managed to reach Anuradhapuram in the morning at about 10 a.m. It was a mixture of pleasant surprise and pain to the citizens of the city, to see the condition of the great monk and his companions. Arrangements were quickly made for their rest. On 22nd January, Swamiji went to see the famous Bo tree, a branch from the original (under which Lord Buddha had gained illumination) brought from India a long time back. It was a huge tree now. Thousands of people gathered under it to see him. Swamiji spoke to them about the ideal of worship.

The next 125 miles or so to Jaffna also was tedious. The roads as well as the horse-drawn carriage were in a very bad condition. But, as Goodwin wrote to his American friends, otherwise it was a pleasing journey because the scenic beauty was extraordinary. On the way, Swamiji had to halt for some time at Vavuniya, where a traditional welcome awaited him. After crossing the Elephant Pass, the party had almost reached the outskirts of Jaffna only to find that many of the leading citizens, who had come the distance in several carriages, were waiting to receive Swamiji and accompany the party to Jaffna. Soon the procession reached the city.

Jaffna had virtually been transformed into a heavenly city ready to receive Swami

Vivekananda. Shortage of time notwithstanding, a magnificent arrangement had been made at the Hindu College and along the road leading to it. Thousands of people

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stood along the two miles of the road, from 6 p.m. to midnight, just to have a glimpse of Swamiji. At about 8 p.m., a grand torchlight procession began in which at least fifteen thousand people participated, apart from the bystanders. Of the procession, the newspapers wrote that it was only a sea of human heads all around. In front of every house, irrespective of religious belief, pitchers full of water were placed, lamps were lighted and decorations arranged. At the College campus, there was not an inch of space left by the time the procession reached it. Here Swamiji gave an electrifying lecture for one hour and forty minutes on Vedantism. Mr. Sevier also spoke when the people requested him to do so.

Telegrams poured in from every district and town, requesting Swamiji to visit those places, even if for a short while. Swamiji, however, had to politely refuse all of them, since he had to come over to India soon. He was tired. He would have been 'killed with kindness', as one of his companions remarked.

1. Sankari Prasad Basu, ed., *Swami Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers* (Calcutta: Basu Bhattacharya and Co., Pvt. Ltd., 1969), pp. 124-5. [Hereafter, *Indian Newspapers*.]

To conclude Swamiji's cyclonic tour of Ceylon, we quote the *Indian Mirror*¹ of 21 January 1897:

...He may not be a Roman hero, returning from the field of battle with the laurels of many victories on his brow. But peace hath her victories no less than war and, in the bloodless battle that he has fought on behalf of a religion which he teaches, the highest doctrines of peace and brotherhood amongst mankind entitles him to the eternal gratitude of his fellow believers...

...We cannot yet understand the far-reaching consequences of the work which Vivekananda has achieved. The gift of the Seer has not been vouchsafed to us, and the inspiration of prophecy is not one of our acquirements. But if the present be the best prophet of the future, if coming events cast their shadows before, we may take it upon ourselves to say that Vivekananda has forged the chain which is to bind the East and the West together....

II

The news of the grand felicitation given to Swami Vivekananda in Ceylon had reached India in all its details. India too was fully prepared to receive its monk. Swamiji's route in India to reach Calcutta was as follows: Pamban, Ramnad, Manamadurai, Madurai, Madras and, lastly, Calcutta. He wanted to be in Calcutta before the first week of March to attend the birth anniversary of his Gurudeva.

It was morning, the 17th of January 1897. The Raja of Ramnad, Bhaskara Setupathi, who was probably the first to conceive the idea of sending Swami Vivekananda to the West, had just then finished his daily worship. A telegram came, informing him that Swamiji had confirmed his intention to

visit to Ramnad and would be coming on the 27th instant. The joy of the Raja was boundless. He sent a return telegram, requesting Swamiji never to give up the idea of coming to Ramnad. When the Raja himself began to work hard to receive the great Swami, the enthusiasm of his subjects became tenfold. Thus, within ten days, Pamban—the entry point, the temple town Rameswaram and Ramnad became transformed.

A special launch carrying Swamiji and his party sailed at noon from Jaffna under favourable weather. Leaving behind the beautiful island of Ceylon, which had arisen to the occasion and given him a tremendous and hitherto unheard of welcome, Swamiji and his party, enjoying the delightful voyage, were now on their way to India. They reached the Indian shores at 3 p.m. on 26 January. At the jetty, which was new, specially made for Swamiji, hundreds had already gathered to see him. A beautiful well-decorated pandal was erected on the

The Raja then placed new sandals at the feet of Swamiji and, after removing them, touched them to his own head. What could be more joyful for the citizens than the sight of their noble Raja showing such great respect to the monk?

beach, and the entire area wore a festive look. Upon his arrival, the people waiting at the jetty requested Swamiji to please wait on board, because the Raja himself would be arriving at 5 p.m. to receive him. The party took rest for about two hours, and at 5 p.m. the Raja of Ramnad arrived, travelling all the way from Ramnad.

As soon as the vessel by which Swamiji had sailed was sighted, the Raja was ecstatic. He wept for sheer joy, and with all humility he first of all prostrated himself at the feet of Swamiji and then garlanded him. Next, he

requested Swamiji to sit on the throne in the beautifully decorated state-boat which was to carry them ashore. The Raja then offered reverentially new sandals at the feet of Swamiji and, after removing them, touched them to his own head. What could be more joyful for the citizens than the sight of their noble Raja showing such great respect to the monk? Swamiji was taken to the dais in the pandal. In his welcome address, which was full of emotional expressions, the Raja said that Swamiji had come to harmonize the teachings of the previous prophets—Sankara, Ramanuja, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and others, etc. Next, Mr. Nagalingam Pillai read the address of welcome on behalf of the public. Finally, to all these Swamiji gave a fitting reply.

After the meeting, the party took their places in special carriages. The Raja ordered the horses of Swamiji's carriage to be unharnessed, and then he together with his subjects, walking barefoot, pulled the carriage through the town. All this seems simple now, but then it was one of the greatest surprises, for in those days a prince could rarely be seen in public, not to speak of his walking on the streets, and that too, barefooted. It was a mile long path, but all the same, the Raja and others pulled the carriage. When they reached the bungalow, Swamiji alighted, waved to the large crowd and entered the house. He had food and rest.

On the 27th morning, Swamiji and his team visited the famous Rameswaram temple. To the assembled devotees, who numbered some thousands, he gave a short address. In honour of Swamiji's landing first at Pamban, the Raja gave a sumptuous feast in which thousands of poor people were fed and clothed. It was a sight to see so many people partaking of their food together. Seeing all this, none was happier than Swami Vivekananda. There was onne more remarkable event that had been conceived of

by the Raja. In commemoration of Swamiji's first setting his sacred feet at Pamban, the Raja planned to erect a forty feet high monument with the inscription:

Satyameva Jayate

The monument erected by Bhaskara Setupathi, the Raja of Ramnad, marks the sacred spot where His Holiness Swami Vivekananda's blessed feet first trod on Indian soil, together with the Swamiji's English disciples on His Holiness' return from the Western hemisphere, where glorious and unprecedented success attended His Holiness' philanthropic labours to spread the religion of Vedanta.

27 January 1897

After a three day stay, which brought much joy to the inhabitants, Swamiji and others left Pamban for Ramnad by the Raja's boat at 4 a.m. The group had breakfast in one of the wayfarer rest-houses, and reached the Ramnad shores at 6 p.m. The rest of the journey to Ramnad proper was made by both boat and bullock cart. They had to cross a huge lake, and so had to step again into the royal boat. The Raja waited on the shore of the lake for Swamiji to land. The joy of the thousands that had assembled was great. The Raja then introduced the elite of his state to Swamiji. Canons were fired in honour of Swamiji's arrival. While the Raja himself walked, directing the procession, Swamiji was taken in the state-carriage with the Raja's brother.

As in Ceylon so here too people in thousands thronged both sides of the path and showered flower petals on Swamiji. Torches were lit to illumine the path. The musicians played, 'See the Conquering Hero Comes', when Swamiji first landed, and now they played the traditional music. At last Swamiji reached Shankara Villa, where he was to stay while at Ramnad. After some rest and

refreshments, Swamiji was taken to the large auditorium for an official welcome. As soon as Swamiji entered the hall there were cries of joy from every corner. The Raja then made a beautiful and touching speech in which he praised the greatness of Swamiji. The Raja's brother, Dinakara Setupathi, read the address of welcome, in which he said that the labours of Swami Vivekananda in the West had awakened the apathetic sons and daughters of India to an awareness of the greatness and glory of their ancient faith, etc. Then Swamiji replied in his usual eloquent style. This was said to be one of his best speeches. 'The longest night seems to be

'The longest night seems to be passing away,' he began, '...The nation has awakened now! ...behold, the sleeper is awakening.... None can resist her anymore. Never is she going to sleep anymore!...' The lecture had a thrilling effect upon the audience, as it has indeed even now on its readers.

passing away,' he began, '...The nation has awakened now! ...behold, the sleeper is awakening.... None can resist her anymore. Never is she going to sleep anymore!...' The lecture had a thrilling effect upon the audience, as it indeed has on its readers even now.

A special session of the Parliament of Ramnad, *darbar* as it was called, was held, Swamiji being the guest of honour. The Raja spoke there and in the course of his talk said that Swamiji belonged to that class of people who came once in a few centuries, like Buddha or Christ. Swamiji's reply also was excellent. During his speech Swamiji thanked the Raja for all that he had done and then conferred upon him (the Raja) the title '*Rajarshi*' (sage-king). The Raja accepted the title in all humility. On that occasion a phonograph-recording of Swamiji's voice was

made: Swamiji spoke on the need of Shakti worship in India.

J.J. Goodwin, who accompanied Swamiji all through this trip, wrote, '...(having seen all the rejoicing until now)... it made us very proud of our Swami and we realized what he was to India.'

Swamiji spoke the next morning to a packed audience on the essentials of Hinduism, during which one of the important

'We discovered Swami Vivekananda'—claimed the people of Madras. And the welcome-home of their hero should be the grandest, they thought. So the best men of Madras had formed a committee, the chief of which was the honourable Justice Subrahmanya Iyer.

things he said was that the bane of religion was the caste-based division of people. The Raja presided over the meeting.

Things were getting delayed. Swamiji was in a hurry. He somehow managed to say 'no' to the various loving entreaties that he visit other nearby towns and cities. He was eager to be in his old Calcutta as soon as possible, no doubt, but here was his second city waiting—Madras.

III

'We discovered Swami Vivekananda'—claimed the people of Madras. And their welcome-home of their hero should be the grandest, they thought. So the best men of Madras formed a committee, the chief of which was the honourable Justice Subrahmanya Iyer. The other prominent members were Sri Krishnaswami Iyer, Prof. M. Rangachariar, Prof. Sundararama Iyer, Sir V. Bhashyam Iyengar. Of course, Alasinga Perumal, the devout disciple of Swamiji, and his friends Balaji Rao, Nan-

junda Rao and others, too, were there as active workers. Subscriptions were raised. Pamphlets were printed and distributed throughout the city to make people aware of what exactly Swamiji had done for the world and what he meant to them. At a meeting, Biligiri Iyengar had gladly consented to keep ready his newly built house, the Castle Kernan, overlooking the Bay of Bengal, for the use of Swami Vivekananda.

The plan was like this: Triumphal arches were to be erected at almost all the important places in the city. The entire city was to be decorated exceedingly well. Swamiji would arrive at the Egmore railway station, and hence this station too would be lavishly decorated. A large pandal would be erected on a platform of the station, and a dais built. Another large pandal would be erected on the lawns of the Castle Kernan. Swamiji's entire route to the Castle Kernan would be beautifully decorated.

Meanwhile, on 31st January 1897, the Raja of Ramnad bid a reluctant farewell to Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji left Ramnad for Paramagudi at midnight, by coach. When he arrived at Paramagudi, there was a great ovation. He was venerated by thousands of the local inhabitants. During his lecture here, Swamiji prophesied that within fifty years from then the Western societies would crumble if they did not make spirituality their foundation. This was amply proved true by the two disastrous world wars.

Swamiji's next halt was Manamadurai. Here, a Sanskrit welcome-address was presented to him by the landlords and the common people. In it they thanked Swamiji in glowing terms for having graciously accepted their invitation, and added that, in their firm belief, by his influence alone could the degrading materialistic culture in India be countered. In his reply, Swamiji spoke

about the bane of 'don't touchism' and the need for spreading spiritual knowledge in the country. Though many hundreds could not clearly see Swamiji, they stood for hours only to have a passing glimpse of him. Swamiji reached Madurai at about 10:30 next morning. There he met Swami Shivananda, a brother disciple of his, to the great joy of both.

Swamiji was given a traditional welcome (which included using the elephants and camels of the temple) by the temple

the civilized world..., etc. Swamiji spoke on 'The Mission of Vedanta', in which he discussed at length its greatness and universality. It was one of his very long talks. Swami Vivekananda stayed at Kumbakonam for three days to recover from the strain of the journey. All the same, people came throughout the day to see him. One interesting thing happened while at Kumbakonam. In the crowd one day, Swamiji noticed the psychic Sri Govinda Chetty, whom he had met during his previous visit as a wandering monk. Swamiji asked Chetty to meet him later, and

...they thanked Swamiji in glowing terms for having graciously accepted their invitation, and added that, in their firm belief, by his influence alone could the dreaded materialistic counter-influence on India be annihilated. In his reply, Swamiji spoke about the bane of 'don't touchism' and the need of spreading spiritual knowledge in the country. Though many hundreds could not clearly see Swamiji, they stood for hours only to have a passing glimpse of him.

authorities. (This type of welcome is called *Purna Kumbha Svagatam*.) A public meeting, which thousands of citizens attended, was arranged. The welcome-address presented to Swamiji was very good. He, in his reply to the address, spoke about the two grades of truth taught by our scriptures—the *paramarthika* (transcendent) and the *vyavaharika* (empirical). Another of his valuable utterance was, 'Each one of us will have to believe that everyone else in the world has done his work and the only work remaining to be done to make the world perfect has to be done by himself.'²

Next, Swamiji visited Kumbakonam. On 3rd February, a public function was arranged in a colourfully decorated pandal. While welcoming Swamiji the citizens of Kumbakonam said that his successful work abroad had raised India in the estimation of

spoke to him about the necessity of acquiring hankering for God instead of petty psychic powers. Saying this Swamiji embraced Chetty and, to everybody's surprise, the person was transformed, rid of his psychic powers. En route to Madras, Swamiji had to alight from the train many times to satisfy the people of different cities and towns through which he passed. The student community of Trichinopoly (Tiruchirapalli) was exceptional. They had written to Swamiji to kindly pay a visit to their city, which Swamiji could not do. So the Council of the National High School and also the student population of the city joined the crowd on the platform at four in the morning and presented their address.

The last stop was to be at Mayuram, with no halts further. The train, however, had to stop. At some place near Madras, thousands of enthusiastic people had assembled to see Swamiji. They earnestly requested the station master to stop the train for just a few minutes, but to no avail. Not

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 3, p. 172.

knowing what else to do, hundreds of people jumped onto the tracks, and lay down on them to stop the train. In a panic, the station master had to stop the train. Swamiji was visibly moved by the devotion of the people.

On 5 February 1897, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier along with the Ceylonese Buddhist,

As the procession proceeded, people cheered, showered flower petals, cried, prostrated, and showed in various ways their respect and admiration for their Vivekananda. But now the crowd could not be controlled any further. Hundreds of them rushed forward, unharnessed the horses of Swamiji's carriage, and themselves started pulling the carriage towards the Castle Kernan.

Mr. Harrison, arrived in Madras. They were very cordially received, given a warm reception and accommodated at the Castle Kernan. The next day was the golden day, when Swami Vivekananda, accompanied by Swamis Shivananda and Niranjanananda, was to arrive at Egmore. At the railway station, platform tickets were issued to control people from entering the Egmore station. This notwithstanding, the platform was full the next day.

Swami Vivekananda arrived at Madras on 6th February at 7:30 a.m. As he stepped onto the red-carpet spread on the platform, the crowd became excited and cheered lustily. Rosewater was sprinkled on him and garlands were placed around his neck. Thereafter the reception committee tried to take Swamiji towards the dais. It was so difficult even to move an inch; for, people had jammed into the platform. As soon as Swamiji managed to come out of the railway station, the huge gathering outside cheered and clapped. A short welcome was pro-

posed. Soon Swamiji was seated in a gorgeous carriage. A long train of carriages was to follow him. The huge procession proceeded towards the Castle. At short intervals there were huge arches on which were written slogans: 'Hail, Servant of God', 'Ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti', 'Hearty Greetings of Awakened India', and so on.

On both sides of the road there were people, people and more people. On tree-tops, on houses, on buildings—everywhere there were people. Several hundred policemen were posted to control the crowd, but that was of no use. The procession had to stop frequently to receive welcome addresses and honours. Requested to halt for sometime at the *Andhra Prakashika* office, Swamiji was accorded a warm welcome. The next stop was for a few minutes at Mount Road. Then again at the City Stables, where there was a huge pandal; a Sanskrit address of welcome was given to him here. A *sankirtan* party joined the procession near Chepauk. When the procession halted again to receive mementos, a band party joined the group.

As the procession proceeded, people cheered, showered flower petals, cried, prostrated, and showed in various ways their respect and admiration for *their* Vivekananda. But now the crowd could not be controlled any further. Hundreds of people rushed forward, unharnessed the horses of Swamiji's carriage, and themselves started pulling the carriage towards the Castle Kernan. Once at the Castle, he was given a grand reception. He was led to the dais where, after some initial music etc., two addresses in Sanskrit were presented. Then the President of the committee announced that Swamiji was quite tired and would talk to the people only the next day.

During his stay in Madras, Swamiji had to meet people of various classes through-

out the day, and sometimes even till late at night. In all, he stayed for nine days. During the period, Swamiji had to sing, lecture, discuss, talk, console, and listen to any number of welcome addresses. He was considered to be an avatar, and people lined up to worship his feet. The Raja of Khetri had sent his minister, Munshi Jagmohan, to present an address of welcome to Swamiji.

On the day after his arrival, a grand reception was organized at the Victoria Hall. By the lowest estimate, over ten thousand people assembled there. The hall itself was fully packed, and thousands were standing outside. Swamiji arrived, entered, and the function began. But soon shouts were heard from outside: 'Open air meeting! Open air meeting!' So the meeting was disturbed. The people had become very restive. Sensing the situation, Swamiji declared that he was for the masses and went out to meet the public there. As soon as the gerua-clad monk was spotted outside the auditorium, there was no end to the happy shouts of the people.

Amidst all this, Swamiji got up on a carriage so as to be visible to as many people as possible and tried to lecture. But the enthusiastic applause and shouts were uncontrollable and therefore he could not continue. 'You have *seen* me today: you will hear me some other', he finally said and came away. This is what a correspondent wrote to the *Madras Mail* about that day:³

Sir, the unexpected failure of the great mammoth meeting at the Victoria Public Hall (or shall I say at the People's Park?) yesterday evening ought to open the eyes of the Reception Committee to the necessity of more careful organization. I have no reason whatever to throw the blame on any particular pair of shoulders. According to some, the public had

no business to come in such large numbers. According to others, it was a mistake to have thought of an open-air meeting at the last moment. Yet another view is that the whole arrangement was characterized by an unlucky lack in the organization—by a sleevelessness and ungirtness which is usual with all native organizations. I have neither time nor the inclination to say anything by way of comment on these points.... I am rather concerned about the future arrangements in the matter. It would be absolutely intolerable were Swami Vivekananda to leave us without delivering as many public lectures as possible during his short stay in our midst. I would suggest that the lectures may be arranged for in Harmston's Circus tent. I understand that the amiable proprietress is perfectly willing to lend the use of the tent for a small rent. Let the tickets of admission be charged for.... The proceeds may be devoted to any purpose the Swami pleases. I believe, Sir, this is the only way in which the matter can be arranged.

—S.A.R.

This letter has been quoted in detail only to show what Swamiji meant for the Madras people. Henceforth the committee decided that admission was to be regulated by tickets.

On 9th February, Swamiji visited the Triplicane Literary Society, and in the evening lecture, he spoke out his heart. In the course of the lecture, 'My Plan of Campaign', he revealed what he was reluctant to expose for so long—the suffering he had to endure in the States owing to the so-called friends, the Theosophists. Though the lecture on the whole was comprehensive, still, such frank and fearless talk made the President of the Reception Committee, a prominent member of the Theosophical Society,

3. *Indian Newspapers*, p. 706.

cut off all connection with the Committee. On the 10th, Swamiji visited the Social Reform Association. On the 11th, he went to Dr. Subrahmanya Iyer's house, and on the same evening spoke on 'The Sages of India'. On the 12th, a European lady discussed various topics with Swamiji during his meeting with the public in the forenoon. In the afternoon, a Vaishnava pandit came and tried to draw Swamiji into a doctrinal debate. But Swamiji was least interested and said, 'Tell the pandit... this incarnation of mine is to help put an end to useless and mischievous quarrels and puzzles which only distract the mind, and make men weary of life, and even turn them into sceptics and atheists. In the evening, he visited the Hindu Theological School of Madras. Later, the same evening, he presided over a function of the Annadana Samajam at the Pachaiyappa's Hall.

'Vedanta in Its Application to Indian Life' was the topic of his public lecture on 13th February. On the 14th, he spoke for the last time in Madras, on 'The Future of India'. This was considered to be another of his best lectures, and the gathering too was impressive.

Invitations were pouring in from all quarters for at least a short visit. Balgangadhar Tilak sent a telegram from Poona. How-

ever, because of bad health and the fatigue of travel, Swamiji politely declined these invitations.

The last day came. The 'Navaratri' (or Nine-days) festival at Madras ended. Going by historical records, such great events were never witnessed before—not at least in honour of a monk, and one hesitates to believe that they could be repeated soon in the centuries to come. Naturally, as the hour of departure approached, a gloom spread all over Madras. A grand farewell was arranged. A huge canopy was put up on the harbour pier. The members of the reception committee and many other dignitaries of Madras were there. Swamiji came there at the appointed hour with his companions. Everyone bowed silently. People had gathered to say goodbye to their leader. Prof. Sundararama Iyer asked Swamiji: 'Shall we see you again, and will you continue your Mission work in South India?' 'Have no doubt about that,' said Swamiji, and added, 'I shall take some rest in the Himalayan region, and then burst on the country everywhere like an avalanche.'

...The ship's horn sounded... And then, it was towards his Calcutta again, at last. Far away, the great city waited eagerly and with just pride for her great son. □

Jealousy is the central vice of every enslaved race. And it is jealousy and want of combination which cause and perpetuate slavery.... The secret of Westerner's success is this power of combination, the basis of which is mutual trust and appreciation. The weaker and more cowardly a nation is, so much the more is this sin visible.

—Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda in the Punjab

JASBIR KAUR AHUJA

Swami Vivekananda's reverence for the great Guru Nanak and the other Sikh gurus who followed him, especially for Guru Gobind Singh, is generally known. Possibly this is what prompted him accept an invitation to visit the (then undivided) Punjab during his travels in North India after his first return to India from the West. The following article draws our attention to that visit, to some of the inspiring ideas that came from him during his lectures there, and to Swamiji's influence on Swami Ramatirtha.

The author, a senior Lecturer in English at the Government Junior Service Training Centre, Patiala, Punjab, is an occasional contributor to the PB for the past several years. Recently she has written a short biography of Swamiji in the Punjabi language.

Thirteenth August, 1897, was a red-letter day in the history of the Punjab. It was on this day that Swami Vivekananda, after broadcasting his spiritual message in the West and a whirlwind tour extending from Colombo to Almora, came to Ambala, then a part of the Punjab. He was an unknown monk when he left India for Chicago on 31 May 1893; but when he came back, the whole country rose as one man to welcome him. It was America which discovered the cyclonic monk and gifted him to India. On his return there were multiple invitations for him from every nook and corner of India to deliver lectures. Heeding the request, the Swami started a series of lectures, which are today known as 'Lectures from Colombo to Almora'. His first public lecture in the East was delivered on 16 January 1897, at Colombo where he had landed the previous day, after his memorable work in the West.

In response to the invitations from the Punjab and Kashmir, the Swami travelled through those ports. He visited Ambala, Amritsar, Dharamsala, Rawalpindi, Murree, Srinagar, Jammu, Sialkot and Lahore, and delivered lectures at most of these places. He stayed in Kashmir and Jammu for over a month, and his work there was very much appreciated by the Maharaja and his

brothers. He delivered three lectures at Lahore (of the undivided Punjab) in November 1897, the topic being, 'Problems Before Us', 'Bhakti', and 'Vedanta'.

S. Puran Singh, a great Punjabi poet and writer, was an eye-witness to these lectures. He writes in *The Story of Swami Rama*,¹

One of the causes which led him (Swami Rama) to seek the robe of a monk, in my opinion, was his meeting with Swami Vivekananda at Lahore.

Swami Vivekananda at Lahore was quite an inspiration to the people of the Punjab; his divine eloquence, his burning renunciation, his strength, his power of personality, his gigantic intellect, all made a deep impression on the people. Perhaps his lecture on 'Vedanta' at Lahore was one of the most brilliant pieces of oratory. It was in those days that Swami Vivekananda was made the admiring witness of the Amrita ceremony of Guru Gobind Singh. In his address, Swami Vivekananda spoke of the 'Punjab of the lion-hearted Guru Gobind Singh'. The Swami was a great admirer

1. *The Story of Rama*, (Ludhiana: Kalyani Publishers, 1974), p. 91.

of Guru Gobind Singh.

Puran Singh further writes:

The Swami was put up at Dhyani Singh's Haveli, and I distinctly remember to this moment the huge number of turbanned masses of Lahore that had assembled in the large hall to listen to the Swami. I was then a little boy reading in the college for the intermediate examination of the Punjab University. The scene has been impressed indelibly on my memory. The hall was filled and there was an overflow of people in the courtyard. People eager to see the Swami pressed each other shoulder to shoulder, to pass into the hall. The Swami seeing these earnest unmanageable crowds, announced that he would lecture in the

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open air. The enclosure, the courtyard of the Haveli, is a large one, and there is a temple-like structure with a raised platform in the centre. The Swami ascended the platform and there he stood—superb, a giant in his superb physique, robed in orange like a Rishi of old, with his large fiery eyes magnetising the very air. He had a *dopatta* swung round him and he had a large orange turban in the fashion of a Punjabi. This lion of Vedanta roared and thundered for hours, keeping the Punjabis spell-bound and lifting them up to the delectable heights of his mental eminence.

Lahore was struck, as was struck far off America, by this bold strong monk,

who owed his inspiration to no less a personage than Paramahansa Ramakrishna. One could see the flame of inspiration burning before him in this great person.

I did not know Swami Rama then, but it was he who arranged all those lectures, and he was of the opinion that Swami Vivekananda was at his best while speaking on Vedanta, for that was his subject. This visit of Swami Vivekananda, no doubt, strengthened the silent ambitions of the young Swami Rama for leading the life of a monk, and to go round the world, preaching Vedanta like Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda had already defined Vedanta from a practical point of view, and just as modern educated India, by the contact of the West, has discovered the greatness of *Bhagavad-Gita* in its gospel of duty, so did Swami Vivekananda interpret Shankaracharya's Advaita Vedanta philosophy in terms of Bhakti, Karma, and even patriotism and humanity.

Swami Vivekananda was the first to apply Vedanta even to politics. And it was after meeting with Swami Vivekananda that Swami Rama made up his mind definitely. He had found an exemplar and an interpreter of the comprehensive kind of Advaita Vedanta that he was already evolving within himself. It was the example of Swami Vivekananda that gave tongue to his dumb self-realization, and then he went roaming in the Himalayas and he came down preaching the same practical Vedanta which Swami Vivekananda preached.²

Speaking on the 'Problems Before Us', the first of his three lectures there, Swami Vivekananda, greeting the brave people of the Punjab, admiring the beauty of the spiritual land of five rivers, and paying

² Ibid. pp. 91-4.

tribute to the greatness of Guru Nanak, said:

This is the land which is held to be the holiest even in holy Aryavarta; this is the Brahmavarta of which our great Manu speaks. This is the land from whence arose that mighty aspiration after the Spirit, ay, which in times to come, as history shows, is to deluge the world. This is the land where, like its mighty rivers, spiritual aspirations have arisen and joined their strength, till they travelled over the length and breadth of the world and declared themselves with a voice of thunder. This is the land which had first to bear the brunt of all inroads and invasions into India; this heroic land had first to bare its bosom to every onslaught of the outer barbarians into Aryavarta. This is the land which, after all its sufferings, has not yet entirely lost

Then and then alone you are a Hindu when you will be ready to bear everything for them, like the great example... of Guru Govind Singh.... You may see thousands of defects in your countrymen, but mark their Hindu blood. They are the first Gods you will have to worship even if they do everything to hurt you, even if everyone of them send out a curse to you, you send out to them words of love.

its glory and its strength. Here it was that in later times the gentle Nanak preached his marvellous love for the world. Here it was that his broad heart was opened and his arms outstretched to embrace the whole world, not only of Hindus, but of Mohammedans too.³

Swami Vivekananda was greatly fascinated by the personality and teachings of Guru Gobind Singh. He recognized Guru Gobind Singh as one of the most glorious heroes of our race. Towards the end of the same lecture, referring to the conception of religion as realization, whose fruit is universal love and compassion, and eulogizing the grandeur of the tenth Guru for his universal love and broad vision, said:

Mark me, then and then alone you are a Hindu when the very name sends through you a galvanic shock of strength. Then and then alone you are a Hindu when every man who bears the name, from any country, speaking our language or any other language, becomes at once the nearest and the dearest to you. Then and then alone you are a Hindu when the distress of anyone bearing that name comes to your heart and makes you feel as if your own son were in distress. Then and then alone you are a Hindu when you will be ready to bear everything for them, like the great example... of Guru Govind Singh.... You may see thousands of defects in your countrymen, but mark their Hindu blood. They are the first Gods you will have to worship even if they do everything to hurt you, even if everyone of them send out a curse to you, you send out to them words of love.⁴

In the second lecture on 'Bhakti' delivered on 9 November 1897, Swamiji likened Bhakti to a triangle of which the first angle was that love knew no want and the second that love knew no fear. Love for reward or for return service of any kind was the beggar's religion, the shopkeeper's religion, with very little religion in it. People should not behave like beggars, because in the first place beggary is a sign of atheism. 'Foolish

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 3, p. 366.

4. *Ibid*, pp. 379-80.

indeed is the man who living on the banks of the Ganga digs a little well to drink water.' So is the man who begs material objects from God.

In his third lecture on 'Vedanta', delivered on 12 November 1897, Swamiji made an impassioned appeal for making Vedanta practical, for bringing it out of caves and forests where it so long existed as *rahasya* (secret) and making it applicable to the everyday life of the people. According to Tirtham Goswami,

...this lasted for full two and a half hours. The listeners were so deeply engrossed and it created such an atmosphere that all ideas of home and space were lost. At times one reached the stage of realization of absolute *abheda* (non-difference) between oneself and the cosmic Atman. It struck at the roots of ego and pride itself. In short, it was such a good success as you come by once in a way.⁵

No account of Swamiji's visit to the Punjab will be complete without reference

5. S.N. Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda*, Part II, 2nd edn., pp. 1005-6.

to a seemingly insignificant incident connected with Swami Rama. Before Swami Vivekananda left Lahore, the Swami Rama presented him with a gold watch. Swamiji took it very kindly, but put it back in Swami Rama's pocket, saying, 'Very well friend, I shall wear it here in this pocket.'

Swami Vivekananda inspired our countrymen to follow the example of Guru Gobind Singh, who sacrificed his all for the sake of religion. It is because of the examples set by and inspiration from such saints that India is alive today. Iqbal sang:

*Yunan-o-Misr-o-Roma,
sub mit gaye jahan se
Ab tak magar hai baqi
nam-o-nishan hamara
Kuch baat hai ki hasti
mitti nahin hamari
Sadion raha hai dushman
daur-e-zaman hamara.*

We are still vibrant even though Greek, Egyptian and Roman cultures have ceased to exist. It is not without reason that we have not been obliterated even though for centuries we had enemies around. □

If I did not break my heart over my people I was born amongst, I would do it for somebody else. I am sure of that. This is the way of some, I am coming to see it. We are all after happiness, true; but that some are only happy in being unhappy—queer, is it not? There is no harm in it either, except that happiness and unhappiness are both infectious. Ingersol said once that if he were God, he would make health catching, instead of disease, little dreaming that health is quite as catching as disease, if not more!

—Swami Vivekananda, Letter dated 6 December 1899

'Catch My Fire!'

Vivekananda's Igniting of the Ramakrishna Order

MS. LINDA PRUGH

The following contribution is from a long-standing and ardent member of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda-Vedanta Movement. It is a comprehensive in-depth study—one of the few really good ones we have come across—of the decisive events and ideas that led to the organization of Sri Ramakrishna's Mission. Of particular interest are the references to the hesitation Swamiji had regarding the formal organization of the work, why and how he overcame it, and also how he inspired his brother disciples to join him. Readers are likely to ponder at the end over the question—Is this how all prophetic Missions take shape?

The author is a member of the Vedanta Society of Kansas City, Missouri.

It was summer in the year 1895, and Swami Vivekananda was at Thousand Island Park, in upper New York State. He and some close devotees were in retreat for some weeks. Mary Elizabeth Dutcher, who was his host, had provided the swami with a large room on the second floor of her cottage. One day Christine Greenstidel was out in the frontyard of that house. From there she could look up and see Swami Vivekananda on the verandah outside his room. He was pacing back and forth and muttering to himself. At one point she clearly distinguished his words: 'To organize or not to organize. If I organize, the spirit will diminish. If I do not organize, the message will not spread.'¹

In America, the thrill of seeing creative ideas materialize through the sheer force of organizing power had been working on the swami's mind for some time. He greatly admired the Yankees for their resourcefulness and ability to pull together and get things done, and once remarked: 'The secret of success of the Westerners is the power of

organization and combination. That is only possible with mutual trust and co-operation and help.'²

During the first year of his stay in the States, he had told his host, Emily Lyon of Chicago, 'Madame, I have fallen in love.' 'Why, who is she, Swami?' she had asked him. Then he had laughed and explained: 'Oh, Madame, it is not a woman. It is organization that I love.'³

Just a few months before coming to Thousand Island Park, Swami Vivekananda had written to Sara Bull:

Organization has its faults, no doubt, but without that nothing can be done. And here, I am afraid, I will have to differ from you—that no one ever succeeded in keeping society in good humour and at the same time did great works. One must

1. Gertrude Sen, 'As I Knew Her,' *Prabuddha Bharata*, March 1978, p. 125.

2. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981), p. 94, dated 1894. [Hereafter, *Letters*.]

3. Cornelia Conger, audiotaped talk given, Vivekananda Vedanta Society, Chicago, 1971.

work as the dictate comes from within, and then if it is right and good, society is bound to veer round, perhaps centuries after one is dead and gone. We must plunge heart and soul and body into the work. And until we be ready to *sacrifice* everything to one Idea and to one alone, we *never, never* will see the light.⁴

Sacrifice. It was the heart and soul of everything the swami was and everything he did. And it lies at the heart of the great Ramakrishna Order of India which he left as his legacy to the world. But that legacy exists

Can you become an occidental, of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? This is to be done, and we will do it. You are all born to do it. Have faith in yourselves, great convictions are the mothers of great deeds. Onward forever! Sympathy for the poor, the downtrodden, even unto death—this is our motto.

today because Vivekananda, during his years in the West, was inspired to organize in a grand manner that great spiritual community so that knowledge of the universal spiritual laws known as Vedanta could be broadcast to mankind.

Organization is never easy to live with, even for those who like the idea. Vivekananda knew that organization as such was simply not in the Indian nature. Thus, from early 1894, Swamiji began encouraging his brother monks and disciples to develop certain qualities which he knew would be necessary in order for them to accept the role that organization would eventually play in their lives. And this Swamiji accomplished

through letters, over one hundred of them.

We Will Do It!

In an open letter to some Madras disciples, written January 24, 1894, he told them:

My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life.... Work hard, be steady, and have faith in the Lord....

Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? This is to be done, and *we will do it*. You are all *born to do it*. Have faith in yourselves, great convictions are the mothers of great deeds. Onward forever! Sympathy for the poor, the downtrodden, even unto death—this is our motto.⁵

Seeing the marvelous freedom of the American people, he wrote to disciples in Madras: 'There cannot be any growth without liberty.... In the West, society always had freedom, and look at them.... Liberty is the first condition of growth.'⁶ He also observed an 'absence of jealousy' in the West, and wrote to Alasinga Perumal: 'The faculty of organization is entirely absent in our nature, but this has to be infused. The great secret is—absence of jealousy. Be always ready to concede to the opinions of your brethren, and try always to conciliate. That is the whole secret.'⁷

4. *Letters*, p. 218, dated March 21, 1895.

5. *Letters*, pp. 63-4.

6. *Letters*, p. 175, dated November 19, 1894.

7. *Letters*, p. 129, dated July 11, 1894.

The Fire of Sacrifice

Students of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta are familiar with Sri Ramakrishna's wonderful vision which he had of his beloved Narendra long before he met him. Once he described how one day his mind had soared high in samadhi and had entered the region of ideas and the transcendental realm. At last he had seen seven sages seated in samadhi and a divine child.

The child [he said] came to one of the sages, tenderly clasped his neck with his lovely arms, and addressing him in a sweet voice, tried to drag his mind down from the state of *Samadhi*. That magic touch roused the sage from the superconscious state, and he fixed his half-open eyes upon the wonderful child. His beaming countenance showed that the child must have been the treasure of his heart. In great joy the strange child spoke to him, 'I am going down. You too must go with me.' The sage remained mute but his tender look expressed his assent.... No sooner had I seen Narendra than I recognized him to be that sage.⁸

In the Master's vision, one thing we see is that the sage was in such deep samadhi that only by a tender look could he indicate willingness to take on a body. Another thing we notice is that the child is the treasure of that sage's heart. These show that Swami Vivekananda's time on earth began with great sacrifice which came out of great love. And this has always been the life force of the Ramakrishna Order: sacrifice made out of love, a continuing legacy that has been passed from one generation of disciples to the next. Swami Vivekananda's entire life and his entire mission consisted of a series of sacrifices so that he could fulfill his Mas-

ter's mission. Once he said, 'One eye shed tears of grief when I left home, because I hated to leave my mother, grandmother, brothers, and sisters; and the other eye shed tears of joy for my ideal.'⁹ Sri Ramakrishna had known that his Naren had come to the world to revive spirituality, to bring light to millions. And for this, formal organization of the Ramakrishna Order was necessary.

A New Image

As a result of his carrying Sri Ramakrishna's message of the divinity of man and the harmony of all religions, Swami Vivekananda truly changed the image of spirituality, and through the Ramakrishna Order that new image has been carried all over the globe. Swami Vivekananda removed religion's long face and made it seem simple and fun. He gave religion vitality and humanity and humor. Once he wrote: 'It is a funny world, and the funniest chap you ever saw is He—the Beloved Infinite. Brotherhood or playmatehood—a school of romping children let out to play in this playground of the world. Beyond reason and learning and talking is the feeling, the love, the Beloved. Fill up the cup and we will be mad!'¹⁰

However, Vivekananda also gave strength and truth and majesty to religion. He unveiled and interpreted it in terms of science, logic, reason, and common sense.

Most important, his very presence was permeated with love—not just the love one reads of in scriptures, but a profound and powerful and tangible love that simply re-

8. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1929), pp. 220-

9. Swami Chetanananda, *Vivekananda: East Meets West* (St. Louis: Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 1995), p. viii.

10. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati Memorial Edition), 6:367, dated July 6, 1896. [Hereafter CW.]

verberated through his every word, his every action. Every photo of his, every word he wrote or spoke, every place he went, and everyone who had any association with him were touched by that love. *Still he shakes this world.*

Through the Heart

It is amazing that Vivekananda did so much of the work of organizing the Ramakrishna Order from afar. If one considers his public life to have been from 1893 to his passing in 1902, then most of those years were spent in the West. And yet he was ready to found the Ramakrishna Mission on the first of May 1897, just four months after returning from his first lengthy stay of three and a half years in America and Europe. Of course, the monastic arm of the Order had already been founded, Vivekananda and his brother monks having taken formal vows of renunciation at the Baranagore Math in January 1887. Vivekananda's years in the West seemed to give him a vantage point

It is said that when Satan was asked how he would corrupt a possessor of pure truth, he replied that he would simply tempt that person to set up an organization.

from which he could, during long periods of stillness, reflect on his Master's ideas about monasticism and service, and he foresaw that in order to truly carry out a world-wide mission and spread the living, universal message of Vedanta, a service arm for the Order would be needed which could utilize the help of lay devotees as well as monastics.

It is said that when Satan was asked how he would corrupt a possessor of pure truth, he replied that he would simply tempt that person to set up an organization. Vivekananda knew the potential hazards of organizing the work of his Master, and he

emphasized that the Order founded in the name of Ramakrishna should first and foremost carry the spirit of the Master's renunciation and austerity, and that it must have no connection whatever with politics, power struggles, or commercial influences. He also directed that men's and women's organizations should be separate. All of these points were clearly delineated in the Rules of the Ramakrishna Order. On June 20, 1897, just seven weeks after the founding of the Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Vivekananda wrote to Margaret Noble in London:

I have started work in the fashion in which I myself was trained—that is to say, under the trees, and keeping body and soul together anyhow. I have sent some of my boys to work in famine districts. It has acted like a miracle. I find, as I always thought, that it is through the heart, and that alone, that the world can be reached. The present plan is, therefore, to train up numbers of young men ...and the first attack will be made by sending a number of them over a district. When these sappers and miners of religion have cleared the way, there will be time enough to put in theory and philosophy.

A number of boys are already in training, but the recent earthquake has destroyed the poor shelter we had... Never mind. The work must be done without shelter and under difficulties.... As yet it is shaven heads, rags, and casual meals....¹¹

A Cord Of Love

Swami Vivekananda's relationship with his brother-disciples was complex and operated at two levels. At one level, he and the other fifteen disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were bound together by a cord of love, as monastics and as spiritual brothers

11. CW. 8:406.

who had the same teacher. On the other hand, at the commission of his master, Swami Vivekananda was also the leader of those same brother disciples—his task being to keep them all together and to build onto the cornerstone of a monastic order which had actually been set in place by Ramakrishna himself at Cossipore in January 1886, when he distributed pieces of ochre cloth to eleven of his disciples and sent them out to beg for food.

Swami Vivekananda's letters to his brother disciples and to his own disciples reflect both of these levels of relationship, and they show that indeed both levels were necessary for the building of the Ramakrishna Order. The bond of love and regard which exists between spiritual brothers (or sisters) is eternal, and it stands in spite of any

It is indeed fortunate that, during Vivekananda's public years the telephone was still a rarity and too expensive to be used easily. Thus, almost twelve hundred letters have been preserved to carry his spirit all over the world. His presence in those letters is unmistakable, letting us know we are never alone.

circumstances or events. Writing from the West, from a distance of thousands of miles, the swami, through the genius of his spiritual insight and personality, was able to set firmly in place and establish the details of running the Ramakrishna Order through his letters which were filled with instruction, admonishment, orders, and harshness at times—but always that same old love that he always had for them. By reading his letters, one can, in a manner of speaking, see the entire history and the entire future of the Ramakrishna Order of India.

It is said that sometimes a leader leads best from afar. Perhaps this was the case

with Vivekananda. Perhaps if he had seen the tears in the eyes of a brother disciple who had just gotten a scolding from him, he might have softened his own words and, in turn, his ideals. From a distance he could be objective and firm. Writing from half-way round the globe, he also had to be detailed in his instructions, leaving no room for misinterpretation.

Most important, through the medium of letters he could, without interruption, work up a storm of impassioned eloquence which would forever be preserved, thus inspiring not only the hearts of the recipients again and again but future generations of devotees. It is indeed fortunate that during Vivekananda's public years the telephone was still a rarity and too expensive to be used easily. Thus, almost twelve hundred letters have been preserved to carry his spirit all over the world. His presence in those letters is unmistakable, letting us know we are never alone.

A Voice Without A Form

In 1894 Swami Vivekananda was getting heaps of scandal and criticism forced on him at the hands of Christian missionaries in the States as well as a jealous fellow Indian who had been in the West for some years and had been enjoying fame and honour before Swamiji made his spellbinding entrance onto the world stage. Word of what was happening got back to the Math in India, and his brother monks expressed worry over Vivekananda's safety. In a letter to Swami Ramakrishnananda, he replied:

Great men like you should pay no heed to what [anyone] says. Shall we, children of Sri Ramakrishna, nourished with his heart's blood, be afraid of worm bites? 'The wicked criticize the conduct of the magnanimous, which is extraordinary and whose motives are difficult to fathom.' Remember all this and forgive

this fool.... I want no name—I want to be a voice without a form....

Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood. You must be fearless. It is the coward who fears and defends himself.... Can a leader be made, my brother? A leader is born. And it is a very difficult task to take on the role of a leader. One must be a servant of servants, and must accommo-

be harsh. Instinctively men feel the love clothed in whatever language.¹⁴

Imbibe My Spirit!

In 1894, Swami Vivekananda sent to the Alambazar Math an open letter filled with details and good-natured jabs. He mentioned getting cameras, maps, globes, chemicals, etc., and opening the eyes of

This is the test: He who is Ramakrishna's child does not seek his personal good. Those that care for their personal comforts and seek a lazy life, are none of us. Let them pack off. Propagate his character, his teachings, his religion. This is the only spiritual practice, the only worship, this verily is the means and this the goal. Arise! Arise! A tidal wave is coming.... Arise! Awake!...I cannot write anymore, I only tell you this, that whoever reads this letter will imbibe my spirit!

date a thousand minds. There must not be a shade of jealousy or selfishness, then you are a leader.... Ours is but to follow; love is the best instrument. Love conquers in the long run....

Whether we be ten or two, I do not care, but those few must have perfect character.¹²

And to Swami Akhandananda, who was the first of the swami's brother disciples to take up the spirit of service to God through service to man, he wrote:

The ochre cloth is not for enjoyment. It is the banner of heroic work. You must give your body, mind, and speech to the welfare of the world. Look upon your mother as God, look upon your father as God—the poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted—let these be your God. Know that service to these alone is the highest religion.¹³

'Be the servant if you will rule,' he wrote to Swami Shivananda. 'That is the real secret. Your love will tell even if your words

'poor indigent folk' to what was happening in the rest of the world. He emphasized the need for oral teachings, saying that books wouldn't do. 'Can you do all this?' he asked. 'Or only bell ringing?' Then he added:

What is wanted is the power of organization. Have any of you got that much brain in your head? If you do, let your mind work. We want some disciples—fiery young men—intelligent and brave, who dare to go to the jaws of death, and are ready to swim the ocean. We want hundreds like that, both men and women. Try your utmost for that end alone.

This is the test: He who is Ramakrishna's child does not seek his personal good. Those that care for their personal comforts and seek a lazy life, are none of us. Let them pack off. Propagate his character, his teachings, his religion. This is the only spiritual practice, the only worship, this verily is the means and this the goal. Arise! Arise! A tidal wave is coming.... Arise! Awake!...I cannot write anymore, I only tell you this, that who-

12. *Letters*, pp. 83-7, dated 1894.

13. *Letters*, pp. 93-4, dated 1894.

14. *Letters*, p. 180, dated 1894.

ever reads this letter will imbibe my spirit!¹⁵

Run Like Fire!

Two of the swami's brother disciples wrote to him, complaining that their minds were very restless. He answered:

Whenever you think of yourself, you are bound to feel restless. What business have you to think of peace, my boy? You have renounced everything.... Forget your own self for it, be made over to the idea. As Sri Ramakrishna used to love you, as I love you, come, love the world like that....

Whether I live or die, whether I go back to India or not, you go on spreading love, love that knows no bounds. When death is so certain, it is better to die for a good cause.

Off with laziness. Spread! Spread! Run like fire to all places. Do not depend upon me. Whether I live or die, go on spreading yourselves.¹⁶

To Swami Akhandananda he wrote: 'He who knows how to obey knows how to command. Learn obedience first.'¹⁷ And to Swami Saradananda, he wrote: 'The upshot of the whole thing is—I want bold, daring, adventurous spirits to help me. Else I will work alone. I have a mission to fulfil.'¹⁸

The Vigour Of A Lion

The swami saw in Swami Ramakrishnananda 'an organizing power'. 'That you never lose your centre of gravity is an evidence of this,' he stated, 'but it must be both intensive and extensive.' Then he wrote:

No great work can be achieved by

humbug. It is through love, a passion for truth, and tremendous energy that all undertakings are accomplished. Therefore, manifest your manhood.

Be on the look-out for a site for our Math. Wherever we shall build our Math, there we shall have a stir made.

Let nothing daunt you, who on earth has the power to snub us so long as the Lord favours us? Even if you are at your

To G. G. Narasimhachariar he wrote: 'That you may catch my fire, that you may be intensely sincere, that you may die the hero's death on the field of battle—is the constant prayer of Vivekananda.' And to Alasinga Perumal, Vivekananda wrote: 'The brave alone do great things, not the cowards.... Be brave, be brave! Man dies but once. My disciples must not be cowards.'

last breath, be not afraid. Work on with the vigour of a lion but at the same time with the tenderness of a flower.¹⁹

Swami Vivekananda was a true hero, and he needed true heroes to carry his mission forward. To G. G. Narasimhachariar he wrote: 'That you may catch my fire, that you may be intensely sincere, that you may die the hero's death on the field of battle—is the constant prayer of Vivekananda.'²⁰ And to Alasinga Perumal, Vivekananda wrote: 'The brave alone do great things, not the cowards.... Be brave, be brave! Man dies but once. My disciples must not be cowards.'²¹

Another Demon Like Me

Swami Brahmananda, the spiritual son of Ramakrishna, was destined to bear the brunt of leading the Order for twenty years. It was perhaps for this reason that so much

15. *Letters*, pp. 98, 101, dated 1894.

16. *Letters*, pp. 111-12, dated 1894.

17. *Letters*, p. 267, dated November 13, 1895.

18. *Letters*, p. 274, dated December 23, 1895.

19. *Letters*, pp. 200-04, dated 1895.

20. *CW*. 5:66, dated January 11, 1895.

21. *CW*. 5:86-87, dated July 1, 1895.

of the harshness expressed by Vivekananda was directed at him. Swamiji expected more of him than of others. He knew that Brahmananda would have to take on the leadership of the Order, and that he would have to deal with all kinds of problems and people in the years to come; he would not be able to run off to solitude, though naturally that would be his wish. In 1895 the swami wrote to Brahmananda with details on how to divide up the heavy load that was soon to be thrust on his shoulders. He pointed out the best monks to take on certain responsibilities, and emphasized the need for a permanent centre. 'If you can build a Math, I shall say you are heroes,' he wrote, 'otherwise you are nothing.' Then he added in exasperation:

If I could but get another demon like me!... 'The good live for others alone, the wise man should sacrifice himself for others.'... You are God, I am God, and man is God. It is this God manifested through humanity who is doing everything in this world. Is there a different God sitting high up somewhere?²²

In an open letter to the Math, Vivekananda wrote on April 27, 1896, much more detailed instructions about organizing the work. He delineated management, the governing body, the various departments, and the officers. Then he added a postscript:

Please tell Brahmananda that he who is the servant of all is their true master. He never becomes a leader in whose love there is a consideration of high or low. He whose love knows no end, and never stops to consider high or low, has the whole world lying at his feet.²³

On October 11, 1897, the swami, writ-

ing from North India where he was recuperating his broken health, humbly admitted to Brahmananda that he had been severe in his letters to all of his brother disciples. It is a powerful and moving letter mixed with prophecy and practicality, surrender and fight. He writes:

I now understand that I have been very harsh to all of you. But I knew, however, that you would bear with all my shortcomings; in the Math there is no one else who will do so. I have been increasingly harsh to you. Whatever has happened is now past—it is all the result of past Karma.... Do the work of the Math with Sharat's advice; or do as you will. But I have all along been like a hero—I want my work to be quick like lightning, and firm as adamant. Similarly shall I die also....

To cowards what advice shall I offer?—nothing whatsoever. But this I desire, that I should find shelter at the feet of those brave souls who dared to do great deeds even though they failed to succeed,... O Mother of the Universe, O my Gurudeva, who would constantly say [of me], 'This is a hero!'—I pray that I may not have to die a coward.²⁴

Later, during Vivekananda's second visit to the West, he wrote in two separate letters to Brahmananda:

Don't allow egoism to enter your minds, and let love never depart from your hearts.

Never mind what I have said in previous harsh letters. They will do you good. Firstly, they will make you business-like in the future to keep regular and clear accounts and get the brothers into it. Secondly, if these scoldings don't make you brave, I shall have no more

22. *Letters*, pp. 252-5, dated 1895.

23. *Letters*, p. 293.

24. *Letters*, pp. 368-9.

hopes for you.... Never mind my harshness. You know the heart always, whatever the lips say.²⁵

Be A Giant!

Following his founding of the Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Vivekananda wrote to Swami Shuddhananda:

Even the greatest fool can accomplish a task if it be after his heart. But the intelligent man is he who can convert every work into one that suits his taste. No work is petty....

Lastly, you must remember I expect more from my children than from my brethren. I want each one of my children to be a hundred times greater than I could ever be. Every one of you *must be a giant--must*, that is my word....²⁶

Swami Vivekananda trained and disciplined his brother disciples and his own disciples because he loved them and knew they would only succeed in carrying the Master's message if they lived the Master's ideals. He spent hours with the other monks and brahmacharins talking about the old days at the feet of Ramakrishna. He inspired the others by sitting with them for regular hours of meditation, study, and devotional singing, despite poor health much of the time. Thus he charged them with a spirit of love and dedication. It was this love, this unconditional love, connecting them with the Master that made all the monks willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of humanity by forming the Ramakrishna Order of India. When the permanent headquarters of the Order were consecrated at Belur on

December 9, 1898, the swami told one disciple: 'Know for certain, my boy, that so long as his name inspires his followers with his ideals of purity, holiness, and loving spirit

Even the greatest fool can accomplish a task if it be after his heart. But the intelligent man is he who can convert every work into one that suits his taste. No work is petty....

of charity to all men, even so long shall he, the Master, sanctify the place with his hallowed presence.'²⁷

After the swami's mahasamadhi on July 4, 1902, Christine Greenstidel wrote: 'It is something to know that he found rest and peace in the certainty that he could trust and that the ideals would always be guarded and protected for him....'²⁸

Swami Vivekananda's life was one great flame of sacrifice which he laid at the feet of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, and that flame still burns. The graceful bearing, the beautiful discipline, the love, devotion, and purity that we devotees observe in the monks of the Order today come from their having drawn near that flame laid by Vivekananda and kept going by Swami Brahmananda and all the others, generation after generation, who lovingly and conscientiously guarded and protected the ideals. □

25. *Letters*, p. 402, dated November 20, 1899; and p. 403, dated November 21, 1899.

26. CW. 7:505, dated July 11, 1897.

27. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981), vol. II, p. 399.

28. Sankari Prasad Basu, *Letters of Sister Nivedita* vol. I, (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1982), appendix, p. 531, dated August 17, 1902.

Ramakrishna Math & Mission Centres*

In India

ANDAMAN

Port Blair: 1992

ANDHRA PRADESH

Hyderabad: (1922) 1973

Rajahmundry: 1951

Visakhapatnam: 1938

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Along: 1966

Itanagar: 1979

Narottam Nagar: 1971

ASSAM

Guwahati: (1939) 1968

Karimganj: (1917) 1929

Silchar: (1924) 1938

BIHAR

Deoghar: 1922

Jamshedpur: (1920) 1927

Jamtara: 1921

Katihar: (1926) 1931

Patna: (1922) 1926

Ranchi:

Morabadi: (1927) 1930

Dumka, Sanatorium: 1951

DELHI

New Delhi: (1927) 1930

GUJARAT

Limdi: 1994

Rajkot: 1927

HARYANA & PUNJAB

Chandigarh: 1956

KARNATAKA

Bangalore: 1903/1909

Mangalore: 1947

Mysore: 1925/1931

Ponnampet: 1927

KERALA

Kalady: (1936) 1941

Kozhikode: (1930) 1943

Palai: 1926

Quilandy: 1915

Thiruvananthapuram: 1916

Thrissur: (1927) 1929

Tiruvalla: 1913

MADHYA PRADESH

Narainpur: 1985

Raipur: (1957) 1968

MAHARASHTRA

Mumbai: 1923

Nagpur: 1928

Pune: 1984

MEGHALAYA

Cherrapunji: 1931

Shillong: 1937

ORISSA

Bhubaneswar: 1919

* As in October 1996.

The year in parenthesis is that in which the centre was started, but not as an official branch of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission; the year given without the parenthesis is that in which the centre became an official branch. Two years separated by '/' indicate the year in which the branch was officially started at some place by the Headquarters, and the year in which it was established at its present location, respectively.

ORISSA (Contd.)**Puri:**

Math: 1932

Mission: 1944

RAJASTHAN

Jaipur: (1978) 1988

Khetri: 1959

TAMIL NADU

Chengalpattu: 1936

Coimbatore: (1930) 1934

Kanchipuram: 1932

Madras:*Myalpore:*

Math: 1897

Students' Home: (1905) 1918

Vidyapith: 1946

Tyagarayanagar:

Mission Ashrama: 1932

Sarada Vidyalaya: 1921

Madurai: (1975) 1987

Nattarampalli: 1908

Ootacamund: 1926

Salem: (1928) 1941

TRIPURA

Viveknagar: (1966) 1989.

UTTAR PRADESH

Allahabad: 1908

Almora: 1916

Kankhal: 1901

Kanpur: (1920) 1931

Kishanpur: 1916

Lucknow: (1914) 1925

Mayavati: 1899

Shyamala Tal: 1915

Varanasi:*Advaita Ashrama:* 1902*Home of Service:* (1900) 1902**UTTAR PRADESH (Contd.)**

Vrindaban: 1907

WEST BENGAL

Antpur: (1961) 1986

Asansol: 1926

Bankura: 1917

Barasat: (1961) 1985

Belur:

Math: 1897/1899

Saradapitha: 1941

Calcutta:*Baghbazar:* 1899/1909*Baranagore:* 1912*Barisha:* 1983*Belgharia:* (1916) 1954*Cossipore:* 1946*(Entally, Advaita Ashrama Branch: 1961)**Gadadhar Ashrama:* 1921*Gol Park:* 1938/1961*Kankurgachhi:* (1883) 1943*Sevapratishthan:* 1932

Chandipur: 1916

Contai: (1913) 1929

Garbeta: 1915

Ichapur: 1994

Jalpaiguri: (1928) 1941

Jayrambati: 1920

Kamarpukur: 1947

Malda: 1924

Manasadwip: 1928

Midnapore: (1914) 1931

Narendrapur: 1943

Purulia: 1958

Rahara: (1943) 1944

Ramharipur: (1952) 1966

Sargachhi: 1897

Sarisha: 1921

Sikra-Kulingram: 1992

Taki: (1931) 1938

Tamluk: (1914) 1929

In Foreign Countries

ARGENTINA

Buenos Aires: 1933

BANGLADESH

Bagerhat: 1926

Baliati: 1910

Barisal: (1904) 1911

Dhaka: (1899) 1914

Dinajpur: (1923) 1930

Faridpur: (1921) 1934

Habiganj: 1921

Mymensingh: 1922

Narayanganj: (1909) 1922

Sylhet: (1916) 1926

CANADA

Toronto: (1968) 1989

FIJI

Nadi: (1937) 1952

FRANCE

Gretz: 1937

JAPAN

Kanagawa-ken: (1959) 1984

MAURITIUS

Vacoas: 1941

NETHERLANDS

Amstelveen: (1986) 1990

RUSSIA

Moscow: 1993

SINGAPORE

Singapore: 1928

SRI LANKA

Colombo: (1924) 1930

SWITZERLAND

Generva: 1958/1972

UNITED KINGDOM

Buckinghamshire: 1948

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

California

Berkeley: 1939

Hollywood: 1930

Sacramento: (1949) 1952

San Francisco: 1900

Illinois

Chicago: 1930

Massachusetts

Boston: 1941

Missouri

St. Louis: 1938

New York

West Side:

Vedanta Society: 1894

East Side:

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda

Centre: 1933

Oregon

Portland: 1925

Rhode Island

Providence: 1928

Washington

Seattle: 1938

NUMBER OF CENTRES ADDED IN EACH DECADE

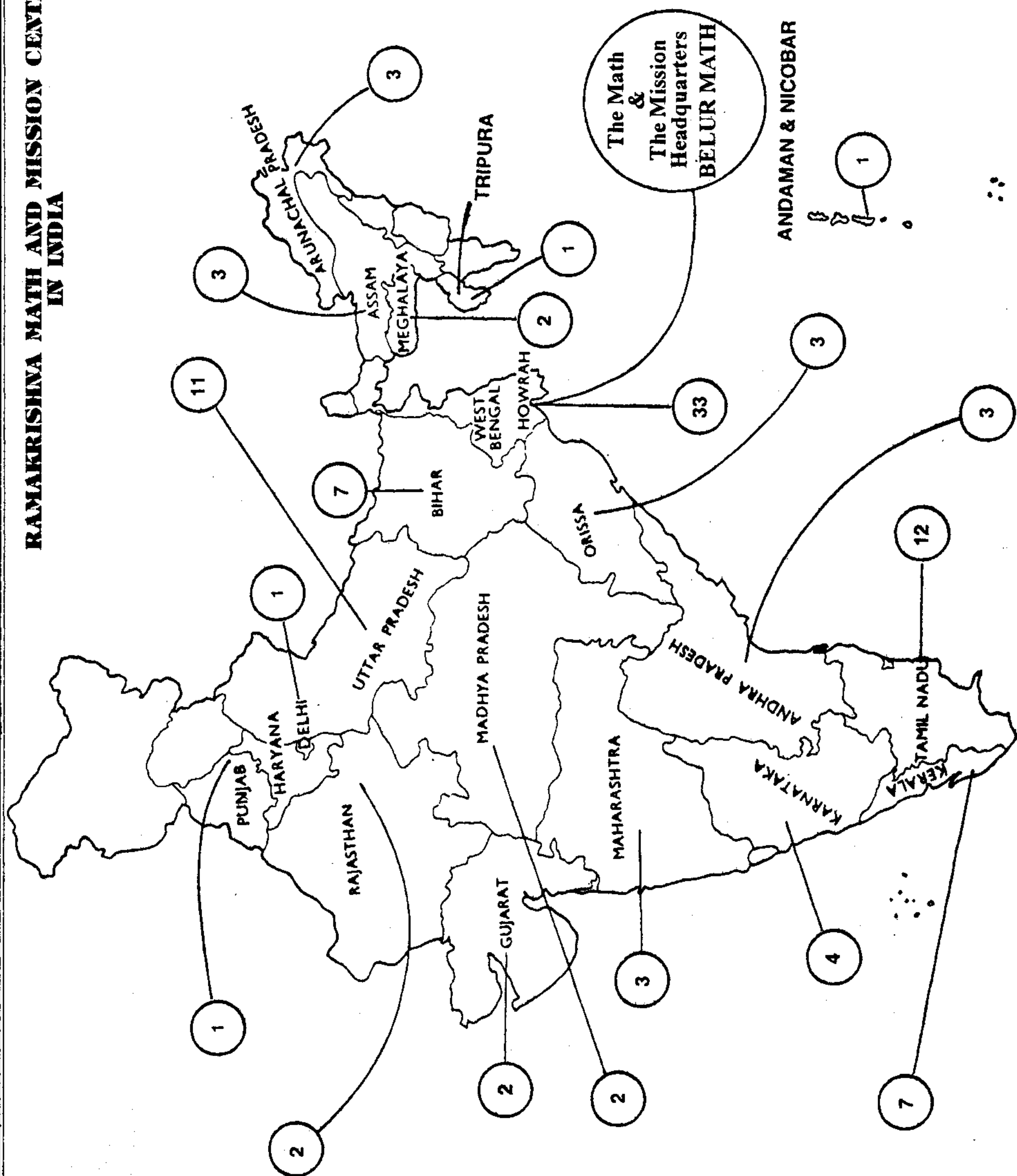
DECADE	1891-1900	1901-1910	1911-1920	1921-1930	1931-1940	1941-1950	1951-1960	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-1996	TOTAL
INDIA	5	7	13	24	15	13	6	4	3	8	4	102
ABROAD	2	1	2	12	7	3	3			3	1	34

INDIAN STATES	1891-1900	1901-1910	1911-1920	1921-1930	1931-1940	1941-1950	1951-1960	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-1996	TOTAL
Andaman											1	1
Andhra Pradesh					1		1		1			3
Arunachal Pradesh								1	2			3
Assam				1	1			1				3
Bihar				5	1		1					7
Delhi				1								1
Gujarat				1								2
Haryana & Punjab							1				1	1
Karnataka		1		2		1						4
Kerala			3	2		2						7
Madhya Pradesh								1		1		2
Maharashtra				2						1		3
Meghalaya					2							2
Orissa			1		1	1						3
Rajasthan							1			1		2
Tamil Nadu	1	1	1	2	4	2				1		12
Tripura										1		1
Uttar Pradesh	1	5	3	1	1							11
West Bengal	3		5	7	4	7	2	1		3	2	34
TOTAL	5	7	13	24	15	13	6	4	3	8	4	102

(Including Belur Math, but excluding the Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta Branch)

ABROAD	1891-1900	1901-1910	1911-1920	1921-1930	1931-1940	1941-1950	1951-1960	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-1996	TOTAL
Argentina					1							1
Bangladesh		1	2	6	1							10
Canada										1		1
Fiji							1					1
France					1							1
Japan										1		1
Mauritius						1						1
Netherlands										1		1
Russia												1
Singapore				1							1	1
Sri Lanka				1								1
Switzerland							1					1
United Kingdom						1						1
United States of America	2			4	4	1	1					12
TOTAL	2	1	2	12	7	3	3			3	1	34

RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION CENTRES IN INDIA



Organization and Yourself

Some members keep their organizations strong

While others join and just belong

Some dig right in, some serve with pride,

But some go along just for a ride,

Some volunteer to do their share,

While some sit back and just don't care

On meeting days some always show

But then there are those who never go,

Some always pay their dues ahead,

Some get behind for months instead,

Some do their best, some build, some make,

Some never give, but always take

Some lag behind, some let things go

Some never help their organization grow

Some drag, some pull, some don't, some do

Now decide, which of these are you?

(Sent to us by the Editor, Vedanta Kesari, Madras—the other English monthly of our Order, who had received it from a VK reader from Mysore, who found it pasted on the notice-board of one of the offices he visited.)

Close Encounters with 'The Cyclonic Hindoo'

EDITH D. TIPPLE

How did Swamiji first appear to Americans and what impact did he have on those who heard him, those who met him, and those who became his close friends and disciples? Edith D. Tipple reviews his first trip to the West from the perspective of the Americans he encountered there. She is a long-time devotee of the Vedanta Society of Southern California and lives in Santa Barbara, California.

I

The First Impress

Devotees of Swami Vivekananda consider him an Ever-Perfect soul. His accomplishments, then, are already a *fait accompli* and we really only give lip service to the difficulties he faced when he set out to represent his religion at a World Parliament of Religions in a far distant land and culture. On the commemoration of his return home from this first trip to the West, it seems fitting that we explore in depth, through the eyes of the Americans who first met him, reactions to a young monk. It is important to hear their words from their vantage point of Judeo-Christian ethos and the restless naivete of the New, and isolated, World. Brilliance they noted, but he was also different, exotic, an-other.

Kate Sanborn, popular writer, lecturer, and teacher, was the first American to come in contact with Swami Vivekananda, on the observation car of the Canadian Pacific train on which he was travelling from Vancouver to the Parliament of Religions. Her reminiscence sets the stage of America's reaction to those of other cultures.

...even the gigantically grand scenery of mountains, canyons, glaciers, and the Great Divide could not take my eyes entirely from the cosmopolitan travellers, all *en route* for Chicago. Parsees from India, Canton merchant millionaires, New

Zealanders, pretty women from Philippine Isles married to Portugese and Spanish traders, Japanese dignitaries with their cultivated wives and collegiate sons...

But most of all was I impressed by the monk, a magnificent specimen of manhood... as handsome as Salvini at his best, with a lordly, imposing stride, as if he ruled the universe, and soft, dark eyes that could flash fire if roused or dance with merriment if the conversation amused him.

He wore a bright yellow turban many yards in length, a red ochre robe, the badge of his calling; this was tied with a pink sash, broad and heavily befringed. Snuff-brown trousers and russet shoes completed the outfit.

He spoke better English than I did, was conversant with ancient and modern literature, would quote easily and naturally from Shakespeare or Longfellow or Tennyson, Darwin, Muller, Tyndall; could repeat pages of our Bible, was familiar with and tolerant of all creeds. He was an education, an illumination, a revelation!¹

Miss Sanborn apparently recognized

1. *Western Women in the Footsteps of Swami Vivekananda*, Ed. Pravrajika Atmaprana (New Delhi: Ramakrishna Sarada Mission), p. 8. [Hereafter *Western Women*.]

that the young monk might need a helping hand. A venturesome and kind-hearted woman, she invited him 'if he felt lonely or

Hanson came round the back way, staring, half awe-struck, half amused and said, 'What has she got now, and how did she make it?'²

He spoke better English than I did, was conversant with ancient and modern literature, would quote easily and naturally from Shakespeare or Longfellow or Tennyson, Darwin, Muller, Tyndall; could repeat pages of our Bible, was familiar with and tolerant of all creeds. He was an education, an illumination, a revelation!

—Kate Sanborn

needed help' to come stay with her at her home outside Boston. Not long after, in the interim between arriving in Chicago and the start of the Parliament, Swamiji telegraphed her from Boston. He arrived on the 4:20 train that same day. Her trepidation is evident:

As the cars stopped, even the piercing whistle had a derisive sound and I trembled at the effect he might produce on the crowd gathered for the mail. But he was received in breathless silence. He was such a surprise!

If he had looked regal but bizarre among the group collected from all nations, he was simply amazing on the platform at Gooseville. His luggage was so considerable in amount that the train was ten minutes late at the next stopping place. He had brought almost a Bodleian Library with him of books, recondite and rare, heavy in either sense.

The yellow headgear looked brighter yellow than before.

The mulberry pink sash failed to harmonized at all with the red robe...

He never minded the stares and grins that were most evident to me...

But the climax was reached the next morning, when he was sitting on the porch wrapped in deepest thought... Bill

Kate introduced Swamiji to her cousin, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, himself a journalist, philanthropist, and biographer of the Transcendentalists Emerson, Thoreau and Alcott, who in turn introduced him to Dr. and Mrs. John Henry Wright, he a Professor of Greek at Harvard University. After leaving Miss Sanborn's, Swamiji accepted the Wright's hospitality at their country home in Annisquam, Massachusetts. Mrs. Wright indicates clearly the otherness with which the Swami was viewed.

...He walked with a strange, shambling gait, and yet there was a commanding dignity and impressiveness in the carriage of his neck and bare head that caused everyone in sight to stop and look [at] him; he moved slowly, with the swinging tread of one who had never hastened, and in his great dark eyes was the beauty of an alien civilization which might—should time and circumstances turn into opposition—become intolerably repulsive. He was dark, about the colour of a light quadroon, and his full lips, which in a man of Caucasian race would have been brilliant scarlet, had a tint of bluish purple. His teeth were regular, white and sometimes cruel [!], but his beautiful expressive eyes and the proud wonderful carriage of his head, the swing and grace of the heavy crimson tassels that hung from the end of his sash, made one forget that he was too heavy for so young a man...³

2. Ibid. p. 10.

3. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 1, p. 406. [Hereafter *The Life*.]

In a letter to her Mother, apparently when she had learned to know him better, her tone is considerably softened. She speaks of his guilelessness with her children, and she also paints the picture of an unsophisticated excitement felt by the villagers in observing such a strange new specimen of humanity.

We have been having a queer time. Kate Sanborn had a Hindoo monk in tow... John... invited him up here. He came Friday! In a long saffron robe that caused universal amazement. He was a most gorgeous vision. He had a superb carriage of the head, was very handsome in an oriental way, about thirty years old in time, ages in civilization. He stayed until Monday and was one of the most interesting people I have yet come across. We talked all day all night and began again with interest the next morning. The town was in a fume to see him; the boarders at Miss Lane's in wild excitement. They were in and out of [the Wright's cottage] constantly and little Mrs. Merrill's eyes were blazing and her cheeks red with excitement. Chiefly we talked religion. It was a kind of revival, I have not felt so wrought up for a long time myself!...⁴

...He was wonderfully unspoiled and simple, claiming nothing for himself, playing with the children, twirling a stick between his fingers with laughing skill and glee at their ability to equal him.⁵

From this visit Professor Wright took the young monk under his wing and made it possible for him to serve as 'delegate at

large' at the Parliament, recommending him as being 'more learned than all our learned professors put together'.⁶

Though Swamiji's first speech in America was given at a women's reformatory while visiting Kate Sanborn, it was after his second lecture in a little village church in Annisquam that we hear from Mrs. Wright of his power of oratory. We also hear that he sometimes alienated his audience:

...a current of powerful feeling to be flowing like molten lava beneath the silent surface of this strange being.⁷

...He had another power, an unusual ability to bring his hearers into vivid sympathy with his own point of view. It repelled, in some cases, however, as strongly as it attracted, but whether in support or opposition, it was difficult to keep a cool head or a level judgement when confronted with him.⁸

She expresses the Motherly concern of many who understood the difficulties which lay ahead of him. It is difficult for us now to think of our all-powerful Swamiji in these terms:

...And we saw him leave us after that one little week of knowing him, with fear that clutches the heart when a beloved, gifted, passionate child fares forth, unconscious, in an untried world.⁹

Swamiji then became the guest of a widow, Kate Tannat Woods, in Salem, Massachusetts. Mrs. Woods was an author, poet, journalist and editor, as well as founder of groups dedicated to the rights and privi-

4. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), vol. 1, p. 27. [Hereafter *New Discoveries*.]

5. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 36.

6. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 27.

7. *The Life*, vol. 1, p. 407.

8. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 408.

9. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 409.

leges of women. The Swami's affection for both Mrs. Woods and her son was shown by his giving Prince the staff which he had used in his wandering days, and Mrs. Woods his trunk and blanket.¹⁰ Her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Prince Woods, tells of a meeting Kate had organized, together with her comments concerning it. It is the first we hear of the clash between the Hindu monk and the conservative wing of the Christian Church.

All the ministers were present and none of them appreciated what [Swami Vivekananda] said. Several were most critical... my mother-in-law... many times spoke of the outspoken, narrow attitude of most of the ministers in Salem who openly criticised him in the Pulpit. She had arranged an open meeting in one of the churches and most of the ministers openly accosted him in the most acrimonious manner while he remained gentle in speech and manner.¹¹

The battle gained strength in Chicago at the Parliament, the virulent nature of attack against the Swami readily seen in a quote from the editor of the Presbyterian newspaper *Interior*: 'While in the Parliament, [Vivekananda] was here as our guest, but now that it is over we ought to make an enthusiastic attack against him and his false doctrines.'¹²

Swamiji distanced himself, and support for him grew. The Honorable Mr. Merwin-Marie Snell, president of the Scientific Section, wrote of him:

...beyond question the most popular and influential man in the Parliament,... [who] on all occasions... was received with greater enthusiasm than any other

speaker, Christian or 'Pagan'.¹³

A Swedenborgian minister who attended the Parliament agreed.

...But there was one speaker who stood out above all others, because of his learning, his eloquence and his impressive personality. No other could compare with him except two or three Roman Catholic prelates, and they had sent their best men.... Swami Vivekananda.¹⁴

As well, the Rev. John Henry Barrows wrote in *The World's Parliament of Religions*:

When Mr. Vivekananda addressed the audience as 'Sisters and Brothers of America,' there arose a peal of applause that lasted several minutes.¹⁵

Swamiji was making a grand impression outside, as well as inside, the Parliament. He was reportedly 'one of the most popular of guests in Chicago drawing-rooms'.¹⁶ According to Prince Wolkonsky, a free-lance delegate from Russia:

He made a—what do you call it?—sensational 'hit' in your country, especially with the Chicago ladies. Ah, those Chicago ladies! They seemed to take life—and incidentally themselves—very seriously.¹⁷

One can never forget Mrs. S.K. Blodgett's later recollection.

13. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 85.

14. His Eastern and Western Admirers, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964) p. 132. [Hereafter *Reminiscences*..]

15. *The Life*, vol. 1, p. 418.

16. *New Discoveries*, vol. 1, p. 99.

17. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 100.

10. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 368.

11. *New Discoveries*, vol. 1, p. 50.

12. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 288.

When that young man got up and said, 'Sisters and Brothers of America,' seven thousand people [?] rose to their feet as a tribute to something they knew not what. When it was over I saw scores of women walking over the benches to get near him, and I said to myself, Well, my lad, if you can resist that onslaught you are indeed a God!¹⁸

Nearly as touching are the comments of the poet, Harriet Monroe. In her autobiogra-

Women were not reticent of their interests. Having no financial or political voice, they had taken over the cultural, religious and educational life of the country. How unlike them was the reserved, though just as enthusiastic, reminiscence of the philosopher, William Ernest Hocking:

...To meet some person may resolve a quest wholly without his knowledge; it may be simply *mode of being* that brings the release.

...what I could feel and understand was that this man was speaking from what he knew, not from what he had been told... I began to realize that Spencer could not be allowed the last word. And furthermore, that this religious experience of mine, which Spencer would dismiss as a psychological flurry, was very akin to the grounds of Vivekananda's own certitude.

—William Ernest Hocking

phy, 'A Poet's Life', she describes Swamiji's effect upon her.

It was... Swami Vivekananda, the magnificent, who stole the whole show and captured the town... The handsome monk in the orange robe gave us in perfect English a masterpiece. His personality, dominant, magnetic; his voice, rich as a bronze bell; the controlled fervor of his feeling; the beauty of his message to the Western world he was facing for the first time—these combined to give us a rare and perfect moment of supreme emotion. It was human eloquence at its highest pitch.

One cannot repeat a perfect moment—the futility of trying to has been almost a superstition with me. Thus I made no effort to hear Vivekananda speak again...¹⁹

This was in some measure the story of my first encounter with Swami Vivekananda... I had a quietly rankling problem of my own.

I had been reading Herbert Spencer... I was convinced by him... but it was somehow a vital injury to think of man as of the animals... I had had... an experience of conversion with a strange enlightenment which gave me three days of what felt like a new vision of things, strangely lifted up; Spencer had explained that all away as an emotional flurry—the world must be faced with a steady objective eye...

...[Vivekananda] spoke not as arguing from a tradition, or from a book, but as from an experience and certitude of his own...

...what I could feel and understand was that this man was speaking from what he *knew*, not from what he had been told... I began to realize that Spencer could not be allowed the last word. And furthermore, that this religious experi-

18. *The Life*, vol. 1, p. 418.

19. *New Discoveries*, vol. 1, p. 86.

ence of mine, which Spencer would dismiss as a psychological flurry, was very akin to the grounds of Vivekananda's own certitude.²⁰

During the Parliament Swamiji lodged with Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lyon. When first meeting the delegate they were to house, and realizing that he was of color, Mrs. Lyons, though not herself prejudiced, was greatly concerned that her other guests might make him feel uncomfortable. This was another problem he would have to contend with in his travels in America. She voiced her fear to Mr. Lyon who, after meeting the young delegate, said:

I don't care a bit, Emily, if all our guests leave! This Indian is the most brilliant and interesting man who has ever been in our home, and he shall stay as long as he wishes.²¹

Thus began a warm friendship between them that was to last as long as Swamiji was in America.

The Lyon's granddaughter, Cornelia Conger, wrote of her memories of him as a child of six when she and her mother, recently widowed, lived with them.

My memories are simply of him as a guest in our home—of a great personality who is still vivid to me! His brilliant eyes, his charming voice with the lilt of a slight well-bred Irish brogue, his warm smile! He told me enchanting stories of India... I used to rush up to him when he came into the house and cry, 'Tell me another story, Swami,' and climb into his lap... He was always wonderful to me!... He asked me many questions about what I learned in school and made me show

him my school-books...

I was fascinated by his turban which struck me as a very funny kind of a hat, especially as it had to be wound up afresh every time he put it on! I persuaded him to let me see him wrap it back and forth around his head.

...So here is my... memory of someone I have loved for all these 62 years—not as a teacher, nor a great religious leader—but as a wonderful and vivid friend who lived in our home.²²

Another reminiscence by a child (seven years old at the time) is that of the George Hale's great niece, Louise McKindley Hyde (Mrs. Herbert Hyde):

I remember Swami very well. I remember his luminous eyes and his beautiful voice. He was so gorgeous, so handsome! I remember him sitting in a beautiful robe and snow-white turban. He pointed his finger at me and said, 'That child is a fire-worshipper.' And, to be sure, I have always loved fire; I have loved fireplaces, and I have also loved the sun.²³

One wonders if he spoke of fire just in order to give the child something tangible to remember him by.

Mrs. John Bagley, the widow of the Ex-Governor of Michigan, met Swamiji at the Parliament in Chicago, but she hosted him in Detroit as well as her summer home in Annisquam. As a guest she said that his presence was 'a continual benediction'.²⁴ She remained a staunch friend until her early death in 1898. In the face of critical gossip of Swamiji, not only in the Indian and American Presses, but in social circles as

20. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 117.

21. *Reminiscences*, p. 141.

22. Ibid. p. 141.

23. *New Discoveries*, vol. 1, p. 279.

well, Mrs. Bagley wrote a friend on 22 June 1894:

...I am glad of an opportunity to express my admiration of his character and it makes me most indignant that anyone should call him in question... In Detroit, an old conservative city, in all the Clubs he is honoured as no one has ever been, and I only feel that all who say one word against him are jealous of his greatness and his fine spiritual perceptions...

He has been a revelation to Christians... he has made possible for us all a diviner and more noble practical life. As a religious teacher and an example to all I do not know of his equal... He has been a guest in my house more than three weeks, and my sons as well as my son-in-law and my entire family found Swami Vivekananda a gentleman always, most courteous and polite, a charming companion and ever-welcome guest... He is a strong, noble human being, one who walks with God. He is as simple and trustful as a child... Wherever he spoke, people listened gladly and said, 'I never heard man speak like that.' He does not antagonize, but lifts people up to a higher level—they see something beyond man-made creeds and denominational names, and they feel one with him in their religious beliefs...

Every human being would be made better by knowing him.... I want every one in America to know Vivekananda.²⁴

Mrs. Mary C. Funke heard Swamiji in Detroit. She appreciated and accepted him from the first moment:

February 14th, 1894 stands out in my memory as a day apart, a sacred, holy day; for it was then that I first saw the

form and listened to the voice of that great soul, that spiritual giant, the Swami Vivekananda, who, two years later, to my great joy and never-ceasing wonder, accepted me as a disciple.*

I can see him yet as he stepped upon the platform, a regal, majestic figure, vital, forceful, dominant, and at the first sound of the wonderful voice, a voice all music—now like the plaintive minor strain of an Eolian harp, again, deep, vibrant, resonant—there was a hush, a stillness that could almost be felt, and the vast audience breathed as one man.

...He held his audience, for his was the grasp of the 'master hand', and he spoke as one with authority. His arguments were logical, convincing, and in his most brilliant oratorical flights never once did he lose sight... the truth he wished to drive home.²⁶

Christine Greenstidel (Sister Christine), who was to become a mainstay of the Nivedita School in Calcutta, accompanied Miss Funke to that lecture. Swamiji was never a stranger to her.

...The forceful virile figure which stepped upon the platform was unlike the emaciated, ascetic type which is generally associated with spirituality in the West. A sickly saint everyone understands, but who ever heard of a powerful saint? The power that emanated from this mysterious being was so great that one all but shrank from it. It was overwhelming. It threatened to sweep everything before it... It was the mind that made the first great appeal, that amazing mind!... It was a mind so far transcend-

* This was at Thousand Island Park, where she recounts his being described in the village as 'a foreign looking man who dressed queerly'

26. *The Life*, vol. 1, p. 466.

24. *The Life*, vol. 1, p. 460.

25. *Ibid.* vol. 1, p. 491.

ing other minds, even of those who rank as geniuses, that it seemed different in its very nature. Its ideas were so clear, so powerful, so transcendental that it seemed incredible that they could have emanated from the intellect of a limited human being. Yet marvellous as the ideas were and wonderful as was that intangible something that flowed out from the mind, it was all strangely familiar. I found myself saying, '*I have known that mind before.*' He burst upon us in a blaze of reddish gold, which seemed to have caught and concentrated the sun's rays....

...He stood on the platform of the Unitarian Church pouring forth glorious truths in a voice unlike any voice one ever heard before... a trumpet call to awake. One felt that one never knew what music was until one heard that marvellous voice.

...All one's values were changed. The seed of spirituality was planted to grow and grow throughout the years until it inevitably reached fruition...

Those who came to the first lecture at the Unitarian Church came to the second and to the third, bringing others with them... they came until there was no place to hold them... stood in the aisles, peered in at the windows... And so began a new life, a life of study, of meditation. The centre of interest was shifted.²⁷

Though we do not have a personal account of the meetings between Swamiji and John D. Rockefeller, the strong-willed oil magnate who was to become so great a benefactor of public works, it would seem an oversight not to mention the overwhelming influence it is believed Swamiji had on him. The early part of 1894, having heard of the Swami through a friend with whom Vivekananda was staying, Rockefeller one day

rudely burst in upon him unannounced. The Swami instantly took the upper hand and told him in no uncertain terms that the money he had accumulated was not his, that he was only a channel through which it could be used for the good of others. Annoyed, the businessman left, but soon returned, unannounced again, to inform the Swami that he had donated a large amount of money to a public institution. 'There you are. You must be satisfied now, and you can thank me for it!' Swamiji's reply was, 'It is for you to thank me.'²⁸

That was the entirety of their relationship as far as we know, but years later, in explaining the reason behind his philanthropy, Rockefeller remarked, 'There is more to life than the accumulation of money. Money is only a trust in one's hands. To use it improperly is a great sin. The best way to prepare for the end of life is to live for others. That is what I am trying to do.'²⁹ There could be no more compelling proof of Swamiji's authority than that he changed the life direction of such a powerful individual.

In April of 1894 Martha Brown Fincke was eighteen and a freshman at Smith College. She boarded with the woman who hosted Swami Vivekananda in Northampton, Massachusetts, a town half-way between New York and Boston. She gives us an impression of the boarders' reaction to him.

The day came, the little guest-room was ready, and a stately presence entered our home. The Swami's dress was a black Prince Albert coat, dark trousers, and yellow turban wound in intricate folds about a finely shaped head. But the face with its inscrutable expression, the eyes

27. *Reminiscences*, p. 160.

28. *The Life*, vol. 1, p. 451.

29. *New Discoveries*, vol. 1, p. 488.

so full of flashing light, and the whole emanation of Power, are beyond description. We were awed and silent...³⁰

He spoke at the home of Martha's parents, to which the College President, the Head of the Philosophy Department and several other Professors and Ministers of Northampton churches came. The continuing antagonism of the Church was coupled, according to her, with that of the Professors present. The fresh mind of the young student exposes the rigidity of such antagonism.

...As his imposing presence faced the row of black-coated and somewhat austere gentlemen, one felt that he was being challenged...

To texts from the Bible, the Swami replied by other and more apposite ones from the same book. In upholding his side of the argument he quoted English philosophers and writers on religious subjects... Why were my sympathies not with those of my own world? Why did I exult in the air of freedom that blew through the room as the Swami broadened the scope of religion till it embraced all mankind? Was it that his words found an echo in my own longings, or was it merely the magic of his personality? I cannot tell, I only know that I felt triumphant with him.

...To me that night he personified Power.... At Chicago the Swami had recently felt the rancour of Christian missionaries, and undoubtedly his accents took on an austerity as he felt the same spirit in these representatives of Western learning. To them Love would not appeal, but Power can awe even when it does not force agreement...³¹

She tells us of the curiosity of the student boarders and of the life-long lessons she learned in so short a time by his simple presence.

Early the next morning loud splashings came from the bathroom, and mingling with them a deep voice chanting in an unknown tongue. I believe that a group of us huddled near the door to listen. At breakfast we asked him the meaning of the chant. He replied, 'I first put the water on my forehead, then on my breast, and each time I chant a prayer for blessings on all creatures.' This struck me forcibly. I was used to a morning prayer, but it was for myself first that I prayed, then for my family. It had never occurred to me to include all mankind in my family and to put them before myself.

...My 'free-thinking' certainly dates from the awakening given me by that freedom-loving soul...

...those two days of his mighty presence have certainly coloured all the rest of my life...³²

The constant attack on Swamiji apparently took its toll. He was no longer always 'gentle in speech' as Mrs. Woods had found him. Mrs. Wright describes a hostile reaction to talks he gave in May of 1894:

...Vivekananda spoke before the Annex upon his religion. It was most poetic, full of reverence and that deep feeling that for the moment makes converts. The trivial faces of some of the women hardened into a fixed attention and they seemed to be straining every nerve in order to follow the speaker; but when he began to tell us our faults and show up our follies and crimes he came down to a lower level and they laughed with the vexed laugh of a sting.

30. *Reminiscences*, p. 149.

31. *Ibid.* p. 150.

32. *Ibid.* p. 151.

[Two days later] Vivekananda... again amused himself by making flings at the Americans. Witty, bitter, sharp flings that were all deserved, all neatly done, all to the point but the man has it in him to do higher things... Reproached the country for its plutocracy, its bad morals, its lack of religion.³³

We see clearly by now his struggle with the traditional, those fearful of anything different. At the same time there was a core of men and women interested in progress, which was typical of America, and interested in Truth. To those Swamiji symbolized promise.

II

The Cast is Set

By the summer of 1894, travelling from one contact to another, Swamiji had met most of the primary characters of his work in the United States, those who were to be the means of his meeting groups and individuals important to his work. The leader of one of those groups was Sarah Farmer. In 1892 she had had a vision of a symposium of liberal religious groups at her Greenacre Hotel in Eliot, Maine. Two years later, with the support of Charles Bonney who had instigated the Parliament of Religions, her dream was manifest.

Though unable to attend the Parliament, Miss Farmer had gone to Chicago in time to meet several of the delegates, one of whom was Swamiji. She had then invited him to the first Greenacre Conference to be held in July. This invitation signalled a tangible acceptance of him in the country, at least in circles of liberal thought. Miss Farmer said of him:

...To know Vivekananda was a renewed consecration; to have him under

one's roof was to feel empowered to go forth to the children of men and to help them all to a realization of their birthright as sons of God. What Greenacre owes to him cannot be put into words... This great soul came into our midst and did more than any other to give the work its true tone, for he lived every day the truths which his lips proclaimed...³⁴

Mrs. Alice Cummings wrote of the Conference:

I sat under [the 'Swami's Pine'] many times and heard Swami Vivekananda give his talks when I was a young girl... How well I remember Swami Vivekananda with his pleasant smile and beautiful eyes. I can see him now in my mind walking up the roads with his Turban and Robe on with people following behind.³⁵

From the Greenacre Conference Swamiji went to the Cambridge (Massachusetts) Conference at the home of Mrs. Ole Bull, who had been one of the first of his New York devotees. She was to become a most devoted friend, financial support and stalwart helper. *Dhira Mata*, the 'Steady Mother,' he called her, and placed her in charge of his American work when he was out of the country.^{\$} She commented in a letter to Dr. Lewis G. Janes after this Conference, which was early in her acquaintance with Swamiji:

...Mr. Vive Kananda as a guest and friend has endeared himself to all. He is so very human and so much of a boy with it all.³⁶

33. *New Discoveries*, vol. 2, p. 58.

34. *Western Women*, p. 96.

35. *New Discoveries*, vol. 2, p. 143.

\$ In 1899 at Ridgely Manor he gave her the gerua cloth.

36. *New Discoveries*, vol. 2, p. 231.

It is interesting to hear, interspersed with references to his knowledge and power, continual mention of a simple, childlike nature. Clearly, the great friendships we are to observe were based upon such sincerity.

In January 1895, Sarah Ellen Waldo attended a class in New York and thereafter became one of his ardent workers. Sister Devamata (Laura Glenn) writes in her reminiscences: 'Those who attended Swami Vivekananda's classes and lectures in New York soon grew familiar with a tall, very portly figure who moved about doing everything... Miss Ellen Waldo was a distant connection of Ralph Waldo Emerson and a person of wide philosophic and general culture... She was truly a 'Servant of the Lord'—her service was continuous and untiring. She cooked, edited, cleaned and took dictation, taught and managed, read proof

We see clearly by now his struggle with the traditional, those fearful of anything different. At the same time there was a core of men and women interested in progress, which was typical of America, and interested in Truth. To those Swamiji symbolized promise.

and saw visitors.³⁷ ... She lived in Brooklyn, two miles away by horse-car, but she arrived at his apartment every morning by eight and stayed until nine or ten o'clock at night. As close as she apparently was to Swamiji, his otherness—in this case his dress—nevertheless, was an embarrassment to Miss Waldo as it set them both apart.

...there was nothing I would not have done for him. When he first came to New York, he insisted on wearing his orange robe everywhere. It required no little courage to walk up Broadway beside

that flaming coat. As the Swami strode along in lordly indifference, with me just behind, half out of breath trying to keep up with him, every eye was turned upon us, and on every lip the question, 'What are they?' Later I persuaded him to adopt more subdued clothing for the street.³⁸

Others among those who attended Swamiji's first lectures in New York and who befriended him and helped him start the Vedanta Society of New York were Dr. and Mrs. Egbert Guernsey. In a letter to Mrs. Bull written during the Spring of 1895 he writes:

...thanking you for your interest in, and kindness to the Swami who by his kindness of heart, great intelligence, purity and nobility of character has endeared himself to me almost like a son. It is a gratification to me to know that ladies like yourself fully appreciate the rare qualities of head and heart, of one, whom I shall always be proud to call my friend.³⁹

Indeed, the family often hosted Swamiji at their home in New York and their cottage at Fishkill Landing, a village 59 miles north of the City. It was at a dinner party for him at the Guernsey's in New York that Constance Gibbons Towne met him. The dinner guests represented every religious creed, she Catholic:

...I thought him as handsome as a god of classic sculpture. He was dark of skin, of course, and had large eyes which gave one the impression of 'midnight blue'. He seemed larger than most of his race, who often to us appear slight of frame because they are small-boned. He had a head heaped with short black

37. *Reminiscences*, p. 136.

38. *Ibid.* p. 137.

39. *New Discoveries*, vol. 3, p. 21.

curls...⁴⁰

There was, of course, a tacit understanding that everyone should be polite about his or her religious differences with the Swami and his so-called non-Christian ('Pagan' is a hard word!) attitude. Alas! as the dinner progressed, the most heated dispute was not with the Swami at all. All of the differences were confined to the Evangelical brethren!

I was seated beside the Swami. We looked on in amused silence at the almost comical intolerance of the Creeds...

It was at this dinner that our friendship began. Afterwards, in the drawing-room, he said to me: 'Miss Gibbons, your philosophy and mine are one; and the heart of our faiths is the same.'⁴¹

What a wonderful thought, to be a friend of Swami Vivekananda! It was such a relationship that we see over and over again in America.

In January of 1895 Josephine MacLeod (Tantine, Joe or Jo-Jo) went to her first class with her sister, Betty Sturgess (later Leggett). It was to change her life irrevocably, though she always insisted that she was Swamiji's friend, not his disciple. Her niece, Frances Leggett, writes, 'The turning-point in Joe's life had been the meeting with Swami Vivekananda... Everything in her mind and heart had since revolved around him... No doubt she helped people, by believing in them mainly as the Swami had believed in *her*, 'You are God!' she would say...⁴²

According to Frances: 'For Betty and

Joe to accept Vivekananda was not extraordinary. He was, so to speak, in the air for such as they. American women hungry for culture, for ever going to lectures, trying each new thing as it appeared on the limited horizon. It was the order of the day.' The strangeness that others saw in him, Tantine never felt or, if she did, she felt drawn toward it. 'The Swami represented *the* thing they were seeking, they and their contemporaries... Culture, wisdom, spirituality, the magic of the East—the opposite of America to America...'⁴³

Tantine speaks of Swamiji:

...From that moment life had a different import. It was as if he made you realize that you were in eternity. It never altered. It never grew. It was like the sun that you will never forget once you have seen.

...One day [Mrs. Roethlisberger] and I went to the Swami and said, 'Swami, will you tell us how to meditate?' He said, 'Meditate on the word "OM" for a week and come again and tell me.' So after a week we went back and Mrs. Roethlisberger said, 'I see a light.' He said, 'Good, keep on.' 'O no, it is more like a glow at the heart. I think that prepared us for recognition of this tremendous life force which he was. His power lay, perhaps, in the courage he gave others. He did not ever seem to be conscious of himself at all. It was the other man who interested him.... He used to make us realize there was nothing secular in life; it was all holy... His presence, you see, was dynamic. You cannot pass that power on unless you have it, just as you cannot give money away unless you have it....

...His dignity impressed everyone. Yet, when someone once said to him,

40. Ibid. vol. 2, p. 48.

41. Ibid. vol. 2, p. 49.

42. Frances Leggett, *Late & Soon, The Transatlantic Story of a Marriage* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), p. 11. [Hereafter *Late & Soon*.]

43. Ibid. p. 95.

'You are so dignified, Swami,' he replied, 'It isn't me, it's my walk.'⁴⁴

At one of his classes Tantine had a marvelous vision of him.

More than one hundred persons were present; they were all seated in the room when Swamiji started speaking... I lifted my eyes and saw with these very eyes (she pointed to her own eyes) Krishna himself standing there and preaching the *Gita*. That was my first wonderful vision. I stared and stared... I saw only the figure and all else vanished.⁴⁵

Swamiji's circle of friends and admirers had now deepened. Francis Leggett, the wealthy New York wholesale grocer who was to become another close friend as well as the first President of the Vedanta Society of New York, was introduced to Swamiji by accompanying Tantine and Betty to a class. Swamiji would later say of him, 'May the Lord bless him. Mr. Leggett is one of the few sincere souls it has been my privilege in this life to know.'⁴⁶ Frank's daughter, Frances,[§]

44. *Reminiscences*, p. 233.

45. *Tantine*, p. 12.

46. *Late & Soon*, p. 278.

§ Though we are not involved with Swamiji's trip to England in this study, it is interesting to note that Frances Leggett, who was Frank and Betty's daughter, married David Margesson, the son of Lady Isabel Margesson of London whom Swamiji met in his first trip to England. Holding him in the greatest esteem, Lady Margesson had had Swamiji bless David and his two sisters. It is Frances and David's son, Lord Frank Margesson, who presently owns Ridgely Manor and is holding it in hopes of selling it to a Ramakrishna Vedanta group. It is also of note that it was in Lady Margesson's drawing room that Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita) first heard Swamiji.

writes: '... for Frank such a friendship was unique. As man to man he recognized in the young monk someone he wanted immediately to know. So different as they were in background, in age, in purpose, there was a spiritual link between them. Frank, successful man of business, typical of western civilization of his day, middle-aged, conservative; and Vivekananda, Hindu monk, young, dynamic, dedicated to a life of service, of no possessions—these two were friends...'⁴⁷

Frank hosted Swamiji at his country home Ridgely Manor in April and Christmas of 1895, for ten weeks on his second trip to America in the summer of 1899, and also at his fishing camp in the White Mountains of New Hampshire in June of 1895. Tantine mentions in a letter to her sister that, after the Easter vacation, Frank said to her:

Vivekananda is the greatest man I ever saw. He has more common sense than anyone I've ever known.⁴⁸

Laura Glenn (Sister Devamata) also attended Swamiji's New York lectures during the winter of 1895. We learn from her the variety of people who attended. They were mostly knowledge dilettantes, but with the experience and sincerity to recognize his authority.

...He began to speak; and memory, time, place, people, all melted away. Nothing was left but a voice ringing through the void. It was as if a gate had swung open and I had passed out on a road to limitless attainment.... He stood there—prophet of infinitude.

...It was a heterogeneous gathering at the classes in those shabby lodgings—old and young, rich and poor, wise

47. *Late & Soon*, p. 96.

48. *New Discoveries*, vol. 3, p. 81.

and foolish; stingy ones who dropped a button in the collection basket, and more generous ones who gave a dollar bill or even two. We all met day after day and became friends without words or association. Some of us never missed a meeting...

We were insatiable knowledge-seekers. We did not limit ourselves to any one doctrine or scripture. We went to one lecture in the morning, a second one in the afternoon, and sometimes to a third in the evening. Philosophy, metaphysics, astrology, each had its turn... our real loyalty belonged to the Swami. We recognized in him a power that no other teacher possessed. It was he alone who was shaping our thought and convictions. Even my dog—an Irish setter—felt this. He would stand perfectly still and a quiver would run through his body whenever Swamiji would lay his hand on his head and tell him he was a true yogi.

They gave him no respite. He taught early and late. Among the most eager were a number of teachers, each with a blank book in hand; and the Swami's words were punctuated by the tap of their pencils taking rapid notes. Not a sentence went unrecorded....

There was still a final Sunday lecture...

...The large audience listened in awed stillness and at the close many left the hall without speaking. As for myself, I was transfixed. The transcendent picture drawn overwhelmed me. The call had come, and I answered.^{49†}

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, a celebrated jour-

nalist and poet, attended lectures with her husband who was passing through a very serious business crisis which, she said, 'required all of his courage and self-control'.

...We reached the hall just as Vivekananda was going on the stage in his robe and turban. We sat in the very last seat of the hall, clasping each other's hands as the impressive orator gave a never-to-be-forgotten talk on things spiritual. When we went out my husband said: 'I feel that man knows more of God than we do. We must both hear him again.'

My husband attended with me not only a number of evening lectures but on several occasions came from his business office during the day to listen to the Swami. I remember him saying, as we went out on the street one day: 'The man makes me rise above every business worry; he makes me feel how trivial is the whole material view of life and how limitless is the life beyond. I can go back to my troubles at the office now with new strength.'⁵⁰

In her Memoirs she writes:

We went out of curiosity... and before we had been ten minutes in the audience, we felt ourselves lifted up into an atmosphere so rarefied, so vital, so wonderful, that we sat spell-bound and almost breathless, to the end of the lecture.⁵¹

She writes her friend Kate Tannat Woods in May of 1895:

...I believe [Vivekananda] to be the re-incarnation of some great Spirit—perhaps Buddha—perhaps Christ. He is so simple—so sincere, so pure, so unselfish. To have listened to him all

49. *Reminiscences*, p. 133.

† Miss Glenn was to become a nun under the guidance of Swami Paramananda in Boston, and to write her beautiful memoirs, *Days in an Indian Monastery*.

50. *New Discoveries*, vol. 3, p. 98.

51. *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 28.

winter is the greatest privilege life has ever offered me. It would be surprising to me that people could misunderstand or malign such a soul if I did not know how Buddha and Christ were persecuted and lied about by small inferiors... His absolute sinking of *self* is what I like... He always makes me feel ashamed that I have ever thought for one moment I was burdened or that I ever spoke of any good act of my own...⁵²

By February of 1895, nine months since Mrs. Wright had spoken of Swamiji's 'witty,

gathered and were initiated. Madame Marie Louise was given sannyas (Abhayananda), as was Leon Landsberg (Kripananda).[†]

Miss Funke paints a many-colored picture of Swamiji those weeks at Thousand Island Park.

Oh, the sublime teaching of Vivekananda! No nonsense... I feel that I shall never be quite the same again for I have caught a glimpse of the Real.

...In the afternoon, we take long walks and the Swami literally, and so

...I believe [Vivekananda] to be the re-incarnation of some great Spirit—perhaps Buddha—perhaps Christ. He is so simple—so sincere, so pure, so unselfish. To have listened to him all winter is the greatest privilege life has ever offered me. It would be surprising to me that people could misunderstand or malign such a soul if I did not know how Buddha and Christ were persecuted and lied about by small inferiors.

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox

bitter flings' at American faults, Emma Thursby mentions that he was no longer refuting criticism and therefore was again speaking only in the kind and gentle manner Mrs. Woods had noted. She writes Mrs. Bull:

...Landsberg said last night that [Swamiji] would never talk again in the old antagonistic spirit... There seems a lovely spirit about Vivek now...⁵³

By June he was able to put his heartfelt desire into action, to focus his efforts on a few who were truly serious. He accepted the invitation of one of his New York students, Miss Dutcher, to spend seven weeks at her summer cottage on Thousand Island Park. There twelve of his most ardent students

simply, finds 'books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good (god), in every thing.' And this same Swami is so merry and fun-loving. We just go *mad* at times.

...We are taught to see God in *everything* from the blade of grass to man—'even in the diabolical man'.

...he unfailingly discovers the little idiosyncrasies of each one—but never sarcasm or malice—just fun.

...His *voice* is wonderfully beautiful. One might well lose oneself in its divine music....

And he was so sweet, so gentle and benign all that evening, just like an indulgent father who had given his children beautiful gifts, although many of us were much older than he.⁵⁴

Sister Christine speaks of him as teacher.

52. Ibid, vol. 1, p. 44.

53. Ibid, vol. 3, p. 30.

† He later gave sannyasa to a third American disciple, Dr. Street (Yogananda).

54. *Reminiscences*, p. 258.

...We were filled with joy. We did not know at that time that we were living in his radiance.... His first overwhelming desire was to show us the path to *mukti* (freedom), to set us free.... His second object, not so apparent perhaps, but always in the under-current, was to train this group to carry on the work in America. 'This message must be preached by Indians in India, and the Americans in America,' he said.... His object was, he said, to teach us to think upon our feet....

... he would encourage us to ask question... often calling on one of us to answer.... He knew how to stimulate the mind of the learner and make it do its own thinking....

... But there was something else, an influence, an atmosphere charged with the desire to escape from bondage.... It was this which made us realize that we were blessed beyond words.... So in us was planted the great desire for freedom....

... We had thought of religious men as grave all the time, but gradually we came to see that the power to throw off the burden of the world at will and live for a time in a state of childlike joy is a certain sign of detachment and comes only to those who have seen the Great Reality....

He refused to solve our problems for us. Principles he laid down, but we ourselves must find the application.... 'Stand upon your own feet. You have the power within you!' he thundered. His whole purpose was—not to make things easy for us, but to teach us how to develop our innate strength. 'Strength! Strength!' he cried. 'I preach nothing but strength....'⁵⁵

In August Swamiji was back in New York before his trip to Europe. The great

sculptress Malvina Hoffman met him there when she was a little girl.

...When he entered the diningroom there was a hush. His dark, bronzed countenance and hands were in sharp contrast to the voluminous, light folds of his turban and robe.

His dark eyes hardly glanced up to notice his neighbors, but there was a sense of tranquility and power about him that made an imperishable impression upon me. He seemed to personify the mystery and religious 'aloofness' of all true teachers of Brahma, and combined with this a kindly and gentle attitude of simplicity towards his fellow men.⁵⁶

Swamiji returned from England to America in December to spend ten days at Christmas with the Leggetts at Ridgely Manor. After this visit Frank shared his appreciation with Tantine in a letter of 6 January 1896, only a few months before the Swami's return to India:

...One night at Ridgely we were all spellbound by his eloquence—such thoughts I have never heard expressed by mortal man such as he uttered for two and a half hours. We were all deeply affected. Swami was inspired to a degree that I have never heard before. He leaves us soon and perhaps we shall never see him again, but he will leave an ineffaceable impression on our hearts that will comfort us to the end of our earthly careers.⁵⁷

In February Swami Kripananda (Leon Landsberg) wrote a letter printed in the *Brahmavadin*, which pointed out the public impact Swamiji had made: '...The public libraries are running after everything that

55. Ibid, p. 165.

56. *New Discoveries*, vol. 3, p. 184.

57. *Late & Soon*, p. 101.

has reference to India; the books of Max Muller, Colebrooke, Deussen, Burnouf, and of all the authors that have ever written in English on Hindu philosophy, find a ready sale; and even the dry and tiresome Schopenhauer, on account of his Vedantic background, is being studied with great eagerness.⁵⁸

In March the Swami made his last public appearance in Detroit. Mary Funke speaks of his popularity there:

...It was Sunday evening, and so great was the crowd that we almost feared a panic. There was a solid line reaching far out into the street and hundreds were turned away....⁵⁹

Professor Wright saw him in Boston the end of the month. According to a letter to his wife, he agreed completely with Emma Thursby:

He is becoming so much gentler, and wiser, and sweeter. Indeed he is most charming. He says his stay in America has taught him a great deal.... He was never so modest....⁶⁰

Canon Wilberforce told swami that they were trying to teach in substance the Vedanta philosophy in the church at the present time, and that he (Swami) was really a missionary to the Church of England.⁶¹

Just before his departure in April Swamiji spoke before the prestigious Graduate Philosophical Club of Harvard University, after which he was offered the

Chair of Eastern Philosophy at the University.[#] William James was present. Professor Wright had reported to his wife in the above-mentioned letter: '...Miss Sibbens told me this evening that [Professor James] was going in to Boston to hear [Swamiji's] talks at every opportunity.⁶² Indeed, the great philosopher/psychologist William

It was Sunday evening, and so great was the crowd that we almost feared a panic. There was a solid line reaching far out into the street and hundreds were turned away.

—Mary Funke

James addressed him 'Master' in a letter of invitation to dinner shortly after meeting him at Mrs. Bull's in September of 1894.⁶³

In farewell to Swamiji on this first record-breaking visit to America, it would be appropriate to read Helen Huntington's appraisal of him and his impact on the country. Published in the March 2, 1896 *Brahmavadin*, she writes:

...Swami Vivekananda has made many friends outside the circle of his followers; he has met all phases of society on equal terms of friendship and brotherhood; his classes and lectures have been attended by the most intellectual people and advanced thinkers of our cities; and his influence has already grown into a deep, strong undercurrent of spiritual awakening. No praise or blame has moved him to either approbation or expostulation; neither money nor position has influenced or prejudiced him. To-

58. *The Life*, vol. 2, p. 67.

59. *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 74.

60. *New Discoveries*, vol. 4, p. 72.

61. *Ibid*, vol. 4, p. 74.

Columbia University had also offered him the Chair of Sanskrit.

62. *New Discoveries*, p. 74.

63. *The Life*, vol. 2, p. 91.

wards demonstrations of undue favouritism, he has invariably maintained a priestly attitude of inattention, checking foolish advances with a dignity impossible to resist, blaming not any but wrongdoers and evil-thinkers, exhorting only to purity and right living. He is altogether such a man as 'kings delight to honour'.⁶⁴

to America to proclaim India's spiritual heritage and to seek help for her downtrodden poor. In such exposition he was to attract seekers of Truth whom it was not his nature to refuse. He had sowed the seed in the East, but he would have to return to sow it in the Western part of the country as well. Swamiji was not finished with America. □

Swamiji's work had changed. He went

64. Ibid, vol. 2, p. 66.



A painting of Swami Vivekananda
by Victor Prus, Moscow

Vedanta Centres and Indian Swamis Outside of India

(As on June 30, 1996)

Compiled by Edith D. Tipple with the assistance of Pravrajika Dhyana-prana of the
Sarada Convent, Santa Barbara, CA, USA

The original information for this study was gathered from several different sources, beginning with Swami Gambhirananda's History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. It was then sent to the Heads of each Centre for confirmation. Many changes were made by them. Consequently, considerable difference between it and all previously published material will be noticed.

The title 'Swami' has been deleted for reasons of space, so that it may be read at a glance as a chart. The Head of the Centre is at the far left margin, Assistants indented. In the U.S., Canada and South America, Branch Centres and affiliated outreach groups are listed in the right hand column of the Centre to which they belong. They are under the direction of the Swami in the left column unless otherwise noted. Deceased, in the case of a Swami who died while at the Centre, is abbreviated "Dec'd". Some private centres are also included and indicated as 'organized' or 'founded' by independent devotees.

UNITED STATES

NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK—West Side

Vedanta Society

Originally started by Swami Vivekananda in Nov. 1894.

(Prior to Incorporation) Saradananda: 1896–May 1897 (to India)

Abhedananda: 1897–1910 (Berkshire Hills, Connecticut Retreat, 1910–21, then to India)

Turiyananda: 1899–1900 (to San Francisco)

Nirmalananda: 1903–1906 (to India) **BROOKLYN, NEW YORK**

Bodhananda: 1906–1907 (to Pittsburg) Nirmalananda: 1905–1906 (to India)

Bodhananda: 1912–1950 (Dec'd)

Paramananda: 1906 (1908 to Mrs. Sara Bull, Boston; started Centre there 1909)

Raghavananda: 1923–1927 [also Pittsburg, PA] (to India)

Gnaneswarananda: 1927–1929 (to Chicago)

Devatmananda: 1932 (to Portland)

Nikhilananda: 1932–1933 (to East Side, N.Y.)

Pavitrnananda: 1951–1977 (Dec'd)

Tathagatananda: 1977

Tathagatananda: 1977–Present

NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK—East Side**Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre**

Nikhilananda: 1933–1973 (Dec'd)

Aseshananda: 1947–1949
(to Hollywood)

Ritajananda 1954–1959

Budhananda: 1959–1964 (to Hollywood)

Bhashyananda: 1964–1965 (to Chicago)

Adiswarananda: 1968–1971

Adiswarananda: 1971–1973 Joint

Adiswarananda: 1973–Present

THOUSAND ISLAND PARK, New York**Vivekananda Cottage (Summer Retreat)**(Home of Miss Elizabeth Dutcher where
Swami Vivekananda gave 'Inspired Talks'
in 1895.) Branch established in 1947.**St. Petersburg, Florida (Private)****Vedanta Center of St. Petersburg**

(Founded: Rev. McBride Panton 1941)

Adiswarananda (Spiritual Advisor):

1985–Present

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS**The Vedanta Society of Massachusetts**

Paramananda: 1909–1940 (Dec'd)

Akhilananda: 1926–1928
(to Providence)**(Separate Centre)**

Akhilananda: 1941–1962 (Dec'd)

Sarvagatananda: 1954–1962

Sarvagatananda: 1962–Present

Sarvatmananda: 1985–Present

COHASSET, MASSACHUSETTS

Paramananda: 1929–1940 (Dec'd)

[Independent 1940, under Gayatri Devi]

MARSHFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

(Retreat) 1946

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND**The Vedanta Society of Providence**

Akhilananda: 1928–1962 (Dec'd)

Nikhilananda: 1931–1932 (to New York)

Satprakashananda: 1937. (to St. Louis)

Sarvagatananda: 1954–1962

Sarvagatananda: 1962–Present

Sarvatmananda: 1985–Present

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Yatiswarananda: 1942–1949 (to India)

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**Vivekananda Vedanta Society**

Gnaneswarananda: 1930–1937 (Dec'd)

Vishwananda: 1938–1965 (Dec'd)

Bhashyananda: 1965–1993

Chidananda: 1991–1993

Chidananda: 1993–Present

GANGES, MICHIGAN**Vivekananda Monastery and Retreat**

1969

PITTSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

Bodhananda: 1907–1912 (to New York)

Raghavananda: 1924–1927 (to India)

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI**The Vedanta Society of St. Louis**

Satprakashananda: 1938–1979 (Dec'd)
 Yuktananda: 1974–1975 (to India)
 Chetanananda: 1978–1979
 Chetanananda: 1979–Present

KANSAS CITY, KANSAS**Vedanta Society of Kansas City**

Organized 1947
 Property purchased 1985

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON**Vedanta Society of Western Washington**

Vividishananda: 1938–1980 (Dec'd)
 Bhaskarananda: 1974–1980
 Bhaskarananda: 1980–Present

HONOLULU, HAWAII**Vedanta Society of Hawaii**

Organized 1954 by Mr. & Mrs. Marozzi
 and Vividishananda

ARLINGTON, WASHINGTON
 (Retreat) 1975

VANCOUVER, B.C., CANADA**Vivekananda Vedanta Society of British Columbia**

Organized 1978

PORTLAND, OREGON**Vedanta Society of Portland**

Prabhavananda: 1925–1929 (to Hollywood)
 Vividishananda: 1929–1930 (to San Francisco)
 Devatmananda: 1932–1954 (to India)
 Aseshananda: 1955–Present
 Shantarupananda: 1991–Present

SCAPPOSE, OREGON

(Retreat) 1936

SAN FRANCISCO**Vedanta Society of Northern California**

Originally started by

Swami Vivekananda in 1900.

SHANTI ASHRAMA

Established by Turiyananda 1900

Turiyananda: 1900–1902 (to India)
 Trigunatitananda: 1903–1915 (Dec'd)
 [Built Hindu Temple 1906]

Prakashananda: 1906–1914
 Prakashananda: 1915–1927 (Dec'd)
 Prabhavananda: 1923–1925 (to Portland)
 Dayananda: 1926
 Dayananda: 1927
 Madhavananda: 1927–1929 (to India)
 Dayananda: 1927–1929 Associate
 Dayananda: 1929–1931 (to India)
 Vividishananda: 1931–1932 (to Washington, D.C.)
 Ashokananda: 1931

Ashokananda: 1932–1969 (Dec'd)
 Shantaswarupananda: 1948–1969 (to Berkeley) (Monastic Retreat) 1937

Shantaswarupananda: 1969–1970 (to India)

Shraddhananda: 1957–1970
 (to Sacramento)

OLEMA, CALIFORNIA

(Retreat) 1946

Swahananda: 1968–1970 (to Berkeley)

Prabuddhananda: 1970–Present

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA**Vedant Society of Berkeley**

Founded 1939. Part of the Vedanta Society of Northern California [San Francisco] until 1966 when it became an official Branch.

Ashokananda: 1939–1969 (Dec'd)

Shantaswarupananda: 1953–1969

Shantaswarupananda: 1969–1970 (to India)

(Independent: **Vedanta Society of Berkeley**) 1970

Swahananda: 1970–1976

(to Hollywood)

Swananda: 1977–1985 (to India)

Aparananda: 1985–Present

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

Established 1975

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA**Vedanta Society of Sacramento**

Part of Vedanta Society of Northern California [San Francisco] until 1966 when it became an official Branch.

Ashokananda: 1949–1969 (Dec'd)

Shantaswarupananda: 1969–1970 (to India)

(Independent: **Vedanta Society of Sacramento**) 1970

Shraddhananda: 1970–1996 (Dec'd)

Pramathananda: 1982–1989 (to Toronto)

Prapannananda: 1989–1996

Prapannananda: 1996–Present

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA**Vedanta Society of Southern California**

Prabhavananda: 1929–1976 (Dec'd)

Aseshananda: 1949–1955

(to Portland)

Ritajananda: 1959–1961 (to Gretz, France)

Vandanananda: 1955–1969 (to India)

Budhananda: 1966 (to India)

Sastrananda: 1964–1967 (to India)

Asaktananda: 1967–1975 (to India)

Chetanananda: 1971–1978
(to St. Louis)

Swahananda: 1976–Present

Aparananda: 1979–1985

Sarvadevananda: 1993–Present

TRABUCO CANYON, CALIFORNIA**Ramakrishna Monastery**

Organized by Gerald Heard

Property transferred 1947

SANTA BARBARA CALIFORNIA**Sarada Convent**

1943 Original property given by Donald Kellogg

1943–1947 Retreat

1947 Convent established

1956 Temple dedicated, present

Madhavananda and Nirvanananda

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA**Vedanta Society of San Diego**

Established 1983

SOUTH PASADENA, CALIFORNIA**Vivekananda House**

Hisotircal landmark where Swami Vivekananda stayed while in Los Angeles in 1900.

Purchased by Don Montague,

deeded to Vedanta Society 1955.

Dedicated 1956,

Madhavananda and Nirvanananda present.

Paramananda: 1923–1940 (Dec'd)
[Independent upon his death in 1940, under Gayatri Devi.]

CANADA

Pramathananda: 1989–Present

[Outreach of Seattle, Washington]

SOUTH AMERICA

Pareshananda: 1989–Present

LA PALOMA, URUGUAY

EUROPE

Dayatmananda: 1994–Present

Veetamohananda: 1994–Present

Chidbhasananda: 1990–Present

Swami Siddheswarananda also worked in Paris, Germany and Switzerland.

Yatiswarananda: 1933

Yatiswarananda: 1935-1938

Sivani Yatiswarananda also worked in the Hague, Amsterdam, Paris, London and Stockholm.

[Note: *Swami Yatisvarananda's central Ashram for Europe was at Engadine, Switzerland. He made occasional visits to Germany and once a year to Italy. (From the 1935 Ramakrishna Mission Report)*]

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre**

Nityabodhananda: 1958–1988 (to India)

Amarananda: 1989–Present

EASTERN EUROPE AND NORTHERN ASIA**MOSCOW, RUSSIA****Ramakrishna Society – Vedanta Centre**

Organized 1991, Affiliated by Headquarters 1993, Registered in Moscow 1995

Jyotirupananda: 1991–Present

OTHER**COLOMBO, SRI LANKA****Ramakrishna Mission**

Avinashananda: 1929–1930

Vipulananda: 1929–1930

Parameshananda: 1930

Ghanananda: 1931–1932

Vipulananda: 1931–1932

Pranavesshananda: 1932–1933

Asangananda: 1932–1936

Pranavesshananda: 1932–1933

Paripurnananda: 1932–1933

Jagadiswarananda: 1933

Sundarananda: 1933–1934

Kedareswarananda: 1934–1936

Kutasthananda: 1935–1936

Vipulananda: 1933–1936

Vipulananda: 1936–1939

Kedareswarananda: 1936–1939

Asangananda: 1939–1940

Nishkamananda: 1939–1940

Avinashananda: 1939–1940

Siddhatmananda: 1941–1951

Nishkamananda: 1941–1942

Avinashananda: 1941–1945

Ritajananda: 1942–1946

Vipulananda: 1942–1948

Hrishikeshananda: 1946

Natarajananda: 1946–1951

Sarvatitananda: 1946–1951

Asangananda: 1951–1954

Natarajananda: 1951–1954

Sarvatitananda: 1951–1954

Varananda: 1952–1954

Kutasthananda: 1953–1954

Prematmananda: 1954–1987

Natarajananda: 1954–1967

SINGAPORE**Ramakrishna Mission**

Adyananda: 1928–1932

Bhaswarananda: 1933–1946

Vamadevananda: 1947–1953

Somananda: 1948–1949

Neerajananda: 1950–1952

Nishkamananda: 1954

Ekatmananda: 1954

Vitasokananda: 1955

Ekatmananda: 1955

Ekatmananda: 1956–1959

Srikananda: 1956–1959

Siddhatmananda: 1960–1980

Srikananda: 1960–1964

Sthitananda: 1960–1973, 1976–1980

Damodarananda: 1962–1976

Ajneyananda: 1965–1973, 1976–1977

Raghunathananda: 1976–1977

Ishananda: 1980

Sastrananda: 1981–1984

Sthitananda: 1981–1982

Ishananda: 1981

Rajeswarananda: 1981–1984

Brahmarupananda: 1983–1984

Sarvarupananda: 1983–1984

Shiveswarananda: 1985–1988

Rajeswarananda: 1985–1987

Brahmarupananda: 1985

Sarvarupananda: 1985–1988

Jagadishananda: 1986–1988

Abhiramananda: 1988

Parasharananda: 1989–1991

Jagadishananda: 1989–1991

Abhiramananda: 1989–1991

Atmadhyanananda: 1991

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA**Ramakrishna Mission(Contd.)**

Sarvatitananda:	1954–1979
Varananda:	1954–1960
Avyayananda:	1960–1973
Aghorananda:	1961–1969
Srirangananda:	1963–1970
Jivanananda:	1967–1987
Virupakshananda:	1971–1978
Mukhyananda:	1975
Chidghanananda:	1978–1981
Samagrananda:	1979–1987
Samprajnananda:	1988–1990
Jivanananda:	1988–1990
Samagrananda:	1988–1990
Rajeswarananda:	1988–1990
Ajaratmananda:	1988–1990
Prematmananda:	1988–1990
Jivanananda:	1990–1991
Samagrananda:	1990–1991
Rajeswarananda:	1990–1991
Ajaratmananda:	1990–1991
Atmaghanananda:	1991–Present
Jivanananda:	1991–Present
Rajeswarananda:	1991–Present
Ajaratmananda:	1991–Present
Samagrananda:	1991–1992
Ritamayananda:	1992–Present

[Note: Swami Vipulananda also organized Jaffna.]

JAPAN**Nippon Vedanta Kyokai**

Siddharthananda:	1984–1993
Medhasananda:	1993–Present

SINGAPORE**Ramakrishna Mission (Contd.)**

Sarvarupananda:	1989–1991
Jayadevananda:	1992–Present
Abhiramananda:	1992–1993
Atmadhyanananda:	1992–1993
Parajnananda:	1992–Present
Atmeshananda:	1994–Present
Bhaktikamananda:	1994–Present

MAURITIUS**Ramakrishna Mission**

Ghanananda:	1939–1946
Nihshreyasananda:	1947–1950
Kritananda:	1951–1971
Tattwabodhananda:	1972–1973
Aparananda:	1974–1978
Sudarshananda:	1976–1979
Puranananda:	1979
Balaramananda:	1979–87
Purnakamananda:	1980
Krishnarupananda:	1987–Present

FIJI ISLANDS**Sri Ramakrishna Mission**

Avinashananda:	1937–1938
Rudrananda:	1939–1985
Damodarananda:	1976–1985
Damodarananda:	1985–Present
Adibhavananda:	1987–Present

MISCELLANEOUS AND OUTREACH GROUPS**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Paramananda:	1909
Vividishananda:	1932–1936 (to Denver)

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Abhedananda:	(from New York)
Satprakashananda:	1937
Vividishananda:	1932–1936
Akhilananda:	(from Providence)
Bhashyananda:	(from Chicago)

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

[Prior to La Crescenta or Hollywood]

Trigunatitananda:	1903
Sachchidananda II:	1905 (to India)

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The Eternal Quest	
Yogeshananda:	1992–Present

DENVER, COLORADO

Vividishananda:	1936–1938 (to Seattle)
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Note: Swami Shraddhananda of Sacramento, California passed away on July 19, 1996, Swami Bhasyananda on October 4, 1996, and Swami Aseshananda on October 16, 1996.

VEDANTA SOCIETY OF GREATER WASHINGTON, D.C.**(Private) 1970****DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA****(Private)****KUALA LUMPUR AND PENANG, MALAYSIA****(Private)****KARACHI AND LAHORE, PAKISTAN****(Closed after the Partition of India in 1947)****RANGOON, BURMA****(Closed)**

Swami Bhashyananda (Chicago) was also associated with outreach groups in Atlanta, Georgia; Baltimore, Maryland; Miami and West Palm Beach, Florida; Louisville, Kentucky; Cleveland, Ohio; Charleston, West Virginia; Madison, Wisconsin; Arlington, Houston and Lubbock, Texas; and Toronto, Canada.

Swami Nihshreyasananda also worked the 2nd half of the 20th Century in South Africa, Zambia and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).



How Does The Ramakrishna Movement Grow?

An Example

Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago

Many of the intimate details of how the Ramakrishna Order has grown over the years under divine guidance, beginning from that haunted and dilapidated 'first monastery' at Baranagore, Calcutta, are unknown to many. Besides, people usually notice the present dynamism of the Movement, rarely showing interest in the historical factors. Very few would have read the History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission by Swami Gambhirananda!

Below is a fairly elaborate narration by Swami Sarveshananda, a monastic member of the Order who has been residing at the Vedanta Society for more than a decade. Some biographical portions concerning the first two monks who inaugurated and built up the work of that Society have been retained, particularly because of their association with the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and the related anecdotes.

Part I: Swami Gnaneshwarananda

The Vedanta Society of Chicago¹ was inaugurated by Swami Gnaneshwarananda, a disciple of Swami Brahmananda, on the 19 January 1930. The inauguration was held on the 9th floor of the Masonic Temple at 32 W. Randolph, with great enthusiasm, and was presided over by Professor Archibald G. Baker of the University of Chicago. Also in attendance were many other distinguished Chicagoans, including Chauncey Blair, both prominent in the social and cultural life of the 'Windy City'.

Swami was born as Satindra Chakravarty in the village of Shekharnagar, about twelve miles from Dacca in East Bengal, on 28 June 1893. Because he was born on a particularly rainy day, during the monsoon season, his sister gave him the nickname 'Badal' (rainy season) by which he was known, and later remembered, affectionately. As a boy, Badal was always the leader

of the village boys. He was a good actor as a child, and had a strong, beautiful voice for singing. He had a taste for religious drama and *kirtan* from his early years.

He once said that, by the time he was fourteen years old, he had decided what he had wanted to do in his life. He would dedicate his life to service. At first it was political service to his motherland. As time passed, this broadened into a passionate desire to serve the poor, the sick and the destitute. Later, this desire broadened even more into the wish to serve all the children of the Divine Mother.

In 1913, Swami Premananda came to Dacca for the first time. Badal was still a student and only twelve years old. In a talk entitled, 'The Mysticism of Love', given in Chicago, he referred to this meeting with Swami Premananda and the impression the Swami made on him. He said, 'It was the power of love which was strongly reflected in the character of one of my teachers. I was a student at the time and I was invited by a friend to visit the Swami when he came to

1. Its name was later changed to the Vivekananda Vedanta Society by Swami Vishwananda.

my home town. At that time, I was a rebel, almost an anarchist, as could be expected in India of those days. That holy man did not impress me by talk or philosophy, but by the sheer power, the sheer "mysticism of love".

It was a turning point in Badal's life. Swami Premananda drew Badal to him as he had drawn thousands of others through the powerful quality of his love, and that love was one of the great influences on Badal's life. The Swami urged the young men who came to him to follow the ideals that Swami Vivekananda had placed before young India. However, Badal had already joined the revolutionary party in Dacca, which was committed to the overthrow of British rule in India. But soon after his meeting with Swami Premananda, Badal changed his mind about using guns to end the British dominion.

He began to see that Swami Vivekananda's method was sounder, so he decided to drop his membership of the party. This took some courage, as he, when he joined, had signed a pledge that stated, 'Anyone leaving the party would be shot.' The leader of the party, a well-known revo-

lutionary named Pulin Das, called a meeting of the Executive Committee, and the Committee reminded Badal of the pledge he had signed. Badal told the Committee quite frankly that he thought that the path chalked out by the Committee was not the right path, and if they spared his life he would join the Ramakrishna Mission. He also told them they could rest assured that he would never divulge any information about their activities. Much argumentation followed, until the leader, who had great respect for Badal's character, recommended that he be allowed to go unconditionally, and the Committee assented.

After meeting Swami Premananda and leaving the revolutionary party, Badal continued with school. He became interested in the work of the Ramakrishna Mission centre in Dacca. In 1914 he graduated from the Jagannath College in Dacca. For two years he continued his postgraduate work, but his heart was not in it. He went to Belur Math, where he received from Swami Brahmananda the vows of brahmacharya in 1917 and sannyasa in 1919. Maharaj gave him the monastic name Gnaneswarananda, meaning the infinite bliss of knowledge of God or



Swami Gnaneswarananda

the infinite bliss of the Lord of Jnana (Shiva).

The Swami was first posted for five years (1917–1922) to our Benaras Sevashram. Part of the time was spent in the spiritual discipline of serving the sick as manifestations of the living God. The rest of the time he spent in meditation and study. While in Banaras he came under the influence of Swami Turiyananda. From Swami Premananda, Swami Gnaneswarananda learnt the power to love; from Swami Turiyananda, he learnt fearlessness and mindfulness.

Speaking of Swami Turiyananda, the Swami once said, 'I had the privilege of sitting at the feet of a great master whose very presence radiated strength and fearlessness. My memory goes back to the lion of spiritual strength and courage whose voice still rings in my ears as he encouraged us by repeating from the Upanishad, "*Abhiih! Abhiih!* (Have no fear! Have no fear!)". He would say, "It is only fear that is holding you down. Dispel fear, and you will find that you can accomplish anything in this world."

'He once wanted me to go to a place to do some difficult work. I did not think I could carry it out, and I told him so. My fear displeased him. "What!", he said, "You come to me and say you cannot do it? What good has your philosophy done you if even now you are under the delusion that you are weak? Go ahead, and try to do it. You may not succeed at first. But persist, and you will get over the weakness of fear. Then everything you do will manifest great power, strength and vitality.' To make a long story short, let me tell you that I was aroused to a higher consciousness of strength and power, and certainly the very memory of work I did under his instruction and encouragement gives me a thrill. It uplifted me for the rest of my life.'

At another time the Swami was severely reprimanded by Swami Turiyananda for what seemed a trifling matter. He had been asked by that Swami to write a letter and had been given the stamps to mail it. The Swami said, 'I had written a few lines for him. He had given me the stamps and asked me to mail the letter. (By the way, I must tell you that we do not lick stamps in India, as that is considered very unsanitary and unhygienic.) I was to get a little bowl of water to wet the stamps with. But I thought I will go out of the room to do it, instead of going out and bringing the water into the room. The Swami said, "Do it here." But I was a little too clever. I thought what is the use of making two trips? I took the letter and went out to put the stamps on it, but when I was sticking the stamps on, I found a two-penny stamp was missing. What a predicament! I had no money. What was I to do? I went to someone else and got a stamp and finally mailed the letter.

When I was going back to Swami's room I thought I would not mention anything about this to him. I would simply maintain a wise silence. When he saw me, Swami smiled and asked me, "Why are you so late? It could not have taken so much time!" I fumbled a bit and told him the truth. Swami said to me, "Here is your stamp. It was lying on the floor." He reprimanded me for about half an hour. Then he said, "Do you think that bawling out, scolding, was too much for a two-penny stamp? But it is not for the stamp I have scolded you. It is for a defect I find in you. If you do ordinary things in such a careless way, you will never be able to attain any state of perfection in your spiritual life." And Swami added, "Always remember to do even the smallest, most inconsequential thing with the same careful attention you give to your spiritual practices."

Swami Gnaneswarananda said that

Swami Turiyananda had conquered fear to such an extent that he had no fear of death. Almost his last words were, 'Have no fear! Everything is real, everything is Brahman. This world is Brahman. Have no fear!'

In a talk given in America many years later, the Swami said, 'Holy Mother was an inexhaustible source of spiritual inspiration and power. It fills my heart with an inexplicable joy to be able to say that I had the rare

Holy Mother was an inexhaustible source of spiritual inspiration and power. It fills my heart with an inexplicable joy to be able to say that I had the rare privilege of meeting this woman of all women. I have seen something in her which I never expect to see in anyone. She was divinity incarnate. She was the most modest of the modest, the most humble of the humble, and at the same time the wisest of the wise and the most powerful of the powerful. And this is no exaggeration. She had absolute ownership over the most precious treasures of spirituality, but she did not make a display of them. She had that unusual faculty of concealing her strength and greatness.

Swami Gnaneswarananda said, 'The secret of how Swami Turiyananda and the other great disciples of Sri Ramakrishna attained to that state of fearlessness regarding death—this phenomenon of all phenomena—of which most people are so afraid, is that they had raised their level of consciousness to the level of God.'

Swami Gnaneswarananda had a deep reverence for the Holy Mother. After receiving Sannyasa at Belur Math, the Swami was not again able to see and pay respects to the Holy Mother. He felt very badly about this. Also, he had been studying the *Gita* then and was having a difficult time understanding a particular verse. About this time the news of the Holy Mother's passing was telegraphed to Benaras where the Swami was working. The Swami was overwhelmed with grief. Shocked and exhausted, he fell down on his bed weeping. He fell asleep and in a dream saw Holy Mother in his room. The whole room was illumined with her presence. She consoled him and then interpreted the verse of the *Gita* that he had been unable to understand. When he woke up, he felt a great peace. He remembered the explanation of the verse, and it satisfied his mind completely.

privilege of meeting this woman of all women. I have seen something in her which I never expect to see in anyone. She was divinity incarnate. She was the most modest of the modest, the most humble of the humble, and at the same time the wisest of the wise and the most powerful of the powerful. And this is no exaggeration. She had absolute ownership over the most precious treasures of spirituality, but she did not make a display of them. She had that unusual faculty of concealing her strength and greatness. This appealed to me as the mightiest of her powers. But it took me some time to understand this. When I saw Holy Mother for the first time, I thought, What is her greatness? Why should I bow down before her just because providence arranged for her to marry Sri Ramakrishna? I had a sense of protest about it. But gradually I learned better. I found in her an all-encompassing, divine love, in which wise or ignorant, pure or impure, high or low, had no distinction whatsoever. They were all accepted within her all-embracing, all-purifying mercy of goodness. I have known of events in the life of this saintly woman which carry a thrilling conviction to my heart, that during my lifetime, I have seen at least one true picture of universal acceptance, indiscriminate grace, and limitless power of love.'

Swami Gnaneswarananda once told one of his students, 'If Holy Mother was on earth today, I would send you to her, even if I had to go out and beg money on the streets of Chicago.

In 1922, Swami Turiyananda, shortly before his death, suggested that Gnaneswarananda be sent to open a centre in Patna, Bihar, accompanied by Swami Ramananda. This was his first public teaching assignment. The two Swamis had visited Patna the year before as guests of some devotees, and it was through these devotees the centre got its start. The work began modestly with two small mud-walled, thatched-roof huts. Many people gathered to attend the Swami's scripture classes. Among them was Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who later became the first President of Independent India. Gradually, through the hard work and genius of the two Swamis and the devotion of the lay members, the organization grew. Today it is one of the major centres of the Order, in India.

The activities of the centre were many. Scriptural classes were given and lectures were held. Gnaneswarananda organized a group of young men to help him nurse patients with typhoid, cholera, and other infectious diseases. He also organized a Vivekananda Association for the little boys and girls to teach them the ideals of Swamiji. He also took part in their games, dramas, and other activities. He left a deep impression upon the children of Patna and was remembered with great love by all who had the rare privilege of knowing him.²

In 1922, there were many heavy floods near Patna. Gnaneswarananda organized

relief efforts and went with a band of young men from Patna to the distressed areas. The relief efforts were a great success.

In the latter part of 1926, the Swami was transferred to Belur Math, much to the dismay of the Patna devotees. A petition signed by one hundred citizens of Patna was sent to Belur, requesting the authorities to reconsider, but the Swami had been appointed to the Working Committee of the Organization and his presence was therefore needed at the headquarters. Before leaving Patna he was given a moving farewell by his many friends and admirers, and was presented with a fountain pen as a token of their deep appreciation and goodwill.

After Gnaneswarananda had been at Belur Math a short time, it was decided that he should go to the United States as a teacher of Vedanta. With Swami Shivananda's blessings, he sailed for New York to assist Swami Bodhananda at the Vedanta Society of New York.

At the time of his arrival in New York, Gnaneswarananda was only thirty-four years of age. Photographs reveal a handsome young man of medium height, athletic build and fair complexion. During his two years in New York, the Swami learnt to communicate with the American public in a way achieved by few Swamis. His command of American English was considered remarkable by all who heard him, and his lectures and articles were admired by many.

In December 1929, two months after the beginning of the Great Depression, he left New York for Chicago, 'the city of my dreams' as he said in his inaugural address, 'where the ancient grandmother of the human race (i.e. India) greeted the most modern of her children through the message of Vivekananda'. His object of coming to Chicago was to start a centre in the city of Swami

2. Mallika Gupta (Cf. footnote 5) and friends found eloquent evidence of the impression left by the Swami on the Patna devotees, especially the children.

Vivekananda's great triumph.

During the course of his inaugural address, the Swami said something that he was to repeat many times and show his sense of history. He said that it was 'a fanciful idea of my own regarding the relationship between India and America, which will bring in a new civilization. The great historic blunder of Columbus, that gave America to the modern world, is very suggestive to me. It is a symbol of a cultural marriage of the East with the West. That unity had to take place through the medium of America. That is why Columbus discovered America instead of India. Also, India and America occupy just the opposite sides of the globe. They are geographically antipodes. To me this is significant. You know, when the two opposite ends of an electric battery meet, they manifest a tremendous energy. So, when modern America is united with ancient India, by assimilating the best of each other's culture, a tremendous civilization will be the result. The Vedanta movement, to my mind, is the pioneer in this great achievement.'

The objectives of the Society were stated on its first letterhead: (1) To disseminate the ethics, psychology and the broad and universal practical spiritual philosophy of the Vedas, through the practice and culture of reason, love, meditation and work.

(2) To promote peace and harmony among mankind by inculcating the oneness of the origin and good of all human aspirations and ideals.

The centre was established at 120 East Delaware Place. The Swami had his living quarters here, and this is where he gave interviews and held public and private classes.

Public lectures were given in a lecture hall at the centrally located Masonic Temple. Besides his public lectures, Swami held two group classes during the week. One for the study of the Yogas, while the other dealt with the Upanishads or other scriptures. He also taught a class in Sanskrit and another in Bengali for those interested. Every Friday, a music class was held at the home of Dr. Satish Chandra Ghosh, a friend of the Swami's and a lay disciple of Vivekananda. The Swami who had a fine voice, and was an excellent musician, taught vocal music as well as the sitar, esraj and tabla (drums). No



Swami Gnaneshwarananda

other Swami in the Order's one hundred years in America had such a genius for teaching music, as far as we know. Groups of his students gave musical performances on festive occasions; throughout life, many of these were proud to have been his students.

Times were difficult in the early thirties. The Great Depression had just begun. At times funds were almost non-existent. At least once, one of the Swami's students, who was out of work at the time, came to visit him one day near lunch time. The Swami knew of the student's problems and asked him to stay and share his lunch with him. They each had a lettuce sandwich and a glass of water!

Not only were the economic difficulties of the times rigorous, but the majority of Americans were unfamiliar with Indian thought. The Swami had to face prejudice, ignorance and, often, opposition. However, his inspired work began to bear fruit. The Sunday lectures soon brought a hundred or more people to hear him. On special occasions there were more. The hall held five hundred and was sometimes full.

In 1933, he organized a Convention of American-based Swamis at the time of the second Chicago World's fair and the 40th anniversary of the advent of Vivekananda in America. All but two American-based Swamis were able to attend.

In the summer of 1934, Gnaneswarananda made a pilgrimage to India. He sailed on the steamship *Europa* to England. After touring much of Europe, observing all the holy places, cultural and political centres with sympathetic eyes and heart, and an in-depth sense of history, he sailed from Naples to Bombay. He spent five days in Bombay and then went by train to Banaras. His three days in Banaras were 'one continu-

ous drama of ritualistic, religious, spiritual and social acts'. From Banaras he went to Patna, where he had begun his public life as a spiritual teacher.

In Patna, he was given many public receptions, and he gave press interviews, mass meetings, musical entertainments, etc. His devoted friends and students showered

Speaking of Swami Turiyananda, the Swami once said, 'I had the privilege of sitting at the feet of a great master whose very presence radiated strength and fearlessness. My memory goes back to the lion of spiritual strength and courage whose voice still rings in my ears as he encouraged us by repeating from the Upanishad, "Abhihi! Abhihi! (Have no fear! Have no fear!)".'

boundless enthusiasm on their beloved Swami. After four days at Patna, the Swami went to Deoghar; he had little time for rest or sleep, but found much inspiration in talking to children. 'These youngsters made me feel very hopeful about the future of India.' He felt it had been a privilege to have been a pioneer worker for the school.

Finally, the Swami reached Belur Math. To him it was like being in heaven. 'It is inspiring, invigorating and purifying to breathe the air here', he wrote. After staying at Belur Math for five days, he took a trip to Dacca and also visited his village home. His mother said that her large joint family of about fifty members were overjoyed to see him again. The Swami later said, 'At our country home there was a huge crowd of people waiting to see me. It was moving to meet all these dear people again. I was overwhelmed with emotion.' He stayed in Dacca for eight days and then returned to Calcutta.

When Swami returned to Calcutta, he

was given a reception held in Albert Hall at the University of Calcutta. There were fifteen hundred people present.

Finally the time came to return to Chicago. Referring to this the Swami wrote, 'The Brotherhood at the Math gave me a farewell party. About a dozen fine speeches were delivered in English and Bengali by the older and younger Swamis. It was really overwhelming for me to hear all those words of love and appreciation from my dear brothers. I made a poor speech, for my voice was choked with suppressed emotion.'

The Swami left Calcutta for Colombo from where he was to sail for the United States. On the way to Colombo, he travelled through many parts of South India. The last place he visited was Vivekananda Rock. From Colombo he sailed aboard the *Kashmir Maru*, a Japanese ship, which took him to Kobe in Japan. While in Japan, the Swami visited Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto, Yokohama and Tokyo. He was very much impressed by the industry and hospitality of the Japanese.

On 8 November 1934, the Swami sailed from Yokohama to San Francisco. the Swami arrived on 21st November in San Francisco where members of the Vedanta Society of the city gave him an enthusiastic reception, and reached Chicago on the 29th.

For the centenary of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna in 1936, Swami organized an elaborate programme. Most of the Swamis of the other centres throughout the United States took part in it. Among the attractions were lectures, a large banquet, and a public performance given by the Swami's music classes. The Swamis attending the celebrations were Akhilananda, Vividishananda, Paramananda and Nikhilananda. The guest speakers at the public banquet held at the tropical room of the Medinah Club were

Rev. George Lake of the Liberal Catholic Church and Dr. Preston Bradley, pastor of the Peoples' Church of Chicago. For this centenary, the Swami wrote and published the first short English biography of Ramakrishna to appear in the U.S.A. This little masterpiece is entitled, *Ramakrishna, the Man and the Power*.

During the ten short years the Swami lived in the United States, he authored several other books, notably *Divine Communion* and *Hinduism Comes to America*. In 1975, a compilation of his writings, *Yoga for Beginners*, was published in Chicago by the Vivekananda Vedanta Society and has remained popular.

During his early years, the Swami had been interested in sculpting. During his last two years he returned to modelling in clay and plaster. Some of his works were given to friends, both monastic and lay. There is a fine plastic statue by him of Sri Ramakrishna at the Centre in Chicago, with copies in several other centres.

In 1933, the Swami began to suffer from a heart condition. The trip to India in 1934 with its widespread, strenuous travels in Europe, Japan and India had been very hard on him and only aggravated his condition. His travel diary contained such notations as 'no sleep last night—awfully hot—tired—heart bad'. Meanwhile during his Chicago days, he had taken several long trips, mostly to visit his brother monks and lend encouragement and tangible help. So, by 1937 the Swami did not feel upto beginning the season's work, and put himself under the care of a doctor. He insisted, however, on teaching a class on 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna' once a week.

On the 9th November, during the last class the Swami gave, he said, 'Understand this life (Ramakrishna's). Read it critically.

Use your little yardstick of understanding until you learn that your yardstick is useless. Then throw away this meagre measurement.'

Swami Gnaneswarananda passed away on Sunday, 14 November 1937, with a sudden massive heart attack, about which his doctors had warned him for some years.³ However, these warnings did little to dampen his wonderful flow of activity, combined with long hours of deep meditation and prayer. His devotees⁴ were griefstricken but not downhearted; for they had reason to believe he was still with them. The devotee⁵

who was with him at the hour of death still recalls it as the most inspiring memory of her life. Several of them, at least four went to India early in 1939, to 'follow his footsteps' for many months, carefully collecting data.⁶ Many of the devotees had musical and/or graphic art training, which the Swami had helped them develop; and at least one ('Kaka' Bhatodekar) stayed near the centre for the rest of his life: the last decade of his life living in the Centre, freely training the devotees in Sitar, tablas, etc., for no charge, 'since the Teacher took none from me!'

Part II: Swami Vishwananda

As soon as possible, after the sudden blow of Gnaneswarananda's death, Swami Vishwananda was sent from Bombay to take over his work. Reaching Chicago in May 1938, he faced a strikingly new situation. To appreciate it, we must review his earlier life. Like Gnaneswarananda, he was a disciple of Swami Brahmananda. Born in Bengal, he graduated from the University of Calcutta with a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. With sharp intellect and deep intuition, he might well have become a fine professor had he not chosen the monk's vocation. He came from a remarkable family: two of his brothers also joined the Ramakrishna Order after college—one being also a medical doctor (Their eldest brother put all of them through school, though knowing well their

bent for renunciation!).

The Swami joined the Order as a novice in 1920; and after receiving brahmacharya, worked for some time at the Madras Centre, finally receiving the vows of Sannyasa in 1923. Within the year, he was assigned to start a centre in Bombay, where devotees had been making efforts to set up a branch centre for over 15 years, and by now had gathered enough funds to rent a small house in Santa Cruz. With one brahmachari, the Swami started work, moving next year to a more suitable building. Some local troubles arose, requiring help, for which Swami Yatiswarananda was 'loaned' from Mayavati for a year to smooth out affairs, leading to a final move to the present site in Khar, a suburb of Bombay.

Permanent buildings were begun there in 1925, and by 1929 a separate library and free dispensary building had been added.

3. The diagnosis seems to have been severe coronary heart disease, quite likely superimposed on a rheumatic heart.

4. So far as we know, he left no initiated disciples; and in several instances suggested that they go to Swami Akhilananda for initiation.

5. Mary (Ganga) Spoonholz, who, like all the Swami's devotees we have met, was his lifelong admirer, leading an exemplary life, friendly and helpful to all.

6. One of these, Mallika Gupta, has written a very fine and authoritative *Life of Swami Gnaneswarananda*, edited by Clive Johnson and published privately; it is the basis for most of Part I.

To the regular work of spreading Ramakrishna's message by lectures and classes at the centre, many such centres in other parts of the city were added soon, on request. A primary school for neighbourhood boys was begun, till after two years the city took up this work. In 1933 a students' home with 15 students was started in another new building. During the centennial of Ramakrishna's birth in 1936, the Swami arranged for a three-day 'Parliament of Religions'. It was held in a local hall and concluded at Bombay University, with Dr. S. Radhakrishnan presiding and participants representing eight major religions.

We have at least one charming report from a distinguished neighbour of the Bombay centre, characterizing him as 'the sociable Swami, strikingly resembling a Christian pries or pastor with his flock...moving

among them and casually visiting the homes of people. He did not inflict any religious discourse, but talked with everyone with a streak of humour. He...readily accepted invitations to dinner...(and) had no restrictions on food.'

Finally, Swami Sarvagatananda adds this dramatic touch: when he himself was hoping to join the Ramakrishna Order, in 1934 he had taken several trips out to the Bombay Ashrama (in Khar) to meet Swami Akhandananda, President of the Order, but each time had been put off because of the Swami's health troubles. When he finally found him at the Ashrama, he was too busy for any visit by such a newcomer. As he was leaving in great despair, from behind him a heavy hand fell on his shoulder: 'My boy, you seem very sad. What's the reason?' Swami Sarvagatananda replied, 'I wanted to



Swami Vishwananda

ask President Maharaj for initiation but have been put off so many times!' 'Never fear, just come tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock and we'll have it arranged.' So the Swami had his desire fulfilled. He was duly initiated by Swami Akhandananda and then was taken into the Order and sent to Kankhal Ashrama. The voice behind this heavy hand belonged to none other than Swami Vishwananda, then President of the Bombay Ashrama, whom he had never met before.

One interesting follow-up: when Vishwananda was well-settled in Chicago, Swami Akhilananda, head of the Providence Centre, told him of his difficulty in finding an assistant swami who would stay on there very long. Thereupon Vishwananda said, 'I think I can get you an assistant; that is, Swami Sarvagatananda.' And it turned out as he predicted, to the great satisfaction of both.

When the call came to go to America, the Swami had to leave a solidly growing group of devotees, plus friends among Parsi, Jewish, Muslim and European communities. The sudden and greatly mourned death of Gnaneswarananda required a hurried departure; and in any event an unusual 'culture shock' awaited the Swami. Gnaneswarananda's gregarious genius for mixing with, and learning from all God's children: anarchists, freedom-fighters, saints, mystics, 'hippies' and dance-musicians, had left for the new Swami an 'avant-garde' group used to treating a Swami as a jolly good fellow and friend.

And from the above it appears that Vishwananda must have been chosen for the task, as one to his liking. But Gnaneswarananda was one out of many millions; and Vishwananda had been used to the life of a Mohanta, with all devotees eager to



Swami Vishwananda

serve him, etc.; thus he could hardly have taken readily to such a super democratic group. However, he made the best of it, living frugally, helping those who needed it, encouraging all in their spiritual practices, but steering clear of most of their outgoing activities and amusements.

A few years after arrival, he moved the Centre to 506 Deming Place: a rented apartment with a large living room where he held classes on the *Gita*, while continuing to give his Sunday lectures in a rented hall, usually at a Unity Church. Then in 1955 a building was purchased at 44 East Elm St., in a quiet, respectable neighbourhood. The building was dedicated on the birthday of Lord Buddha, with Swamis Satprakashananda and Akhilananda present to bless the occasion.

Throughout most of his Chicago stay the Swami held public celebrations (annual banquets) on Sri Ramakrishna's birthday; also annual symposiums to celebrate anniversaries of the 1893 Parliament of Religions, with panelists representing the world's principal religions. After his first few years in Chicago, the Swami began holding 'private' Pujas (for close devotees and friends) on the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamiji, Jesus, Durga and Kali, besides the public banquet for Sri Ramakrishna. He was always in his happiest moods during these functions; but after each one was well finished, with distribution of prasada, he would bow out, retiring into solitude, yet always encouraging the devotees to have a nice lunch at a favourite restaurant nearby, which they also were very pleased to do.

Thus, whether or not it was due to the contrast between Chicago's bustling activities and India's deep-rooted sense of the timeless, the Swami became rather a recluse, with a deep meditative life, revealed only occasionally in talks with his brother-monks

and chosen devotees. In his lectures and class talks he was profound and brilliant: an accomplished story-teller with a photographic memory for incidents and names, nourished by his extensive readings in world literature.

It seems clear that he met, on the voyage from India, W. Somerset Maugham, and so impressed him that Maugham 'got the Swami character in his book, *The Razor's Edge*' from him.⁷ There was always something childlike about him: his artlessness, manner, gaiety, innocence, purity. And all springing from great love, serene, inner happiness, which drew people to him despite his preference for silence and solitude. Of course, to those who came out of curiosity or boredom, he was cool, often aloof but never condemning. And like his Guru (Brahmananda) he would often engage in light talks with them, to speed them on their way!

His last days were especially revealing to those close to him: completely fearless (he had predicted two years before that he had only two more years) and obviously cheerful. Near the end, when he had lost the faculty of speech, he would sometimes take the hands of disciples in his, slap them on the wrists or arms, with boisterous laughter, as if enjoying an amusing story. And at least three observers⁸ confirm that during much of the time when the doctors said he was in 'coma', the Swami was actually quite alert, but in deep meditation, from which he could be only briefly roused by questions from near ones, or bodily pains, etc. Even then, only to smile and/or indicate that he was all right. And so he gave up his body on 25 July 1965.

7. Quoted in the *Chicago Tribune*, 27 August 1965.

8. Swamis Satprakashananda and Sarvagatananda, and Harry Greer.

Part III: Swami Bhashyananda

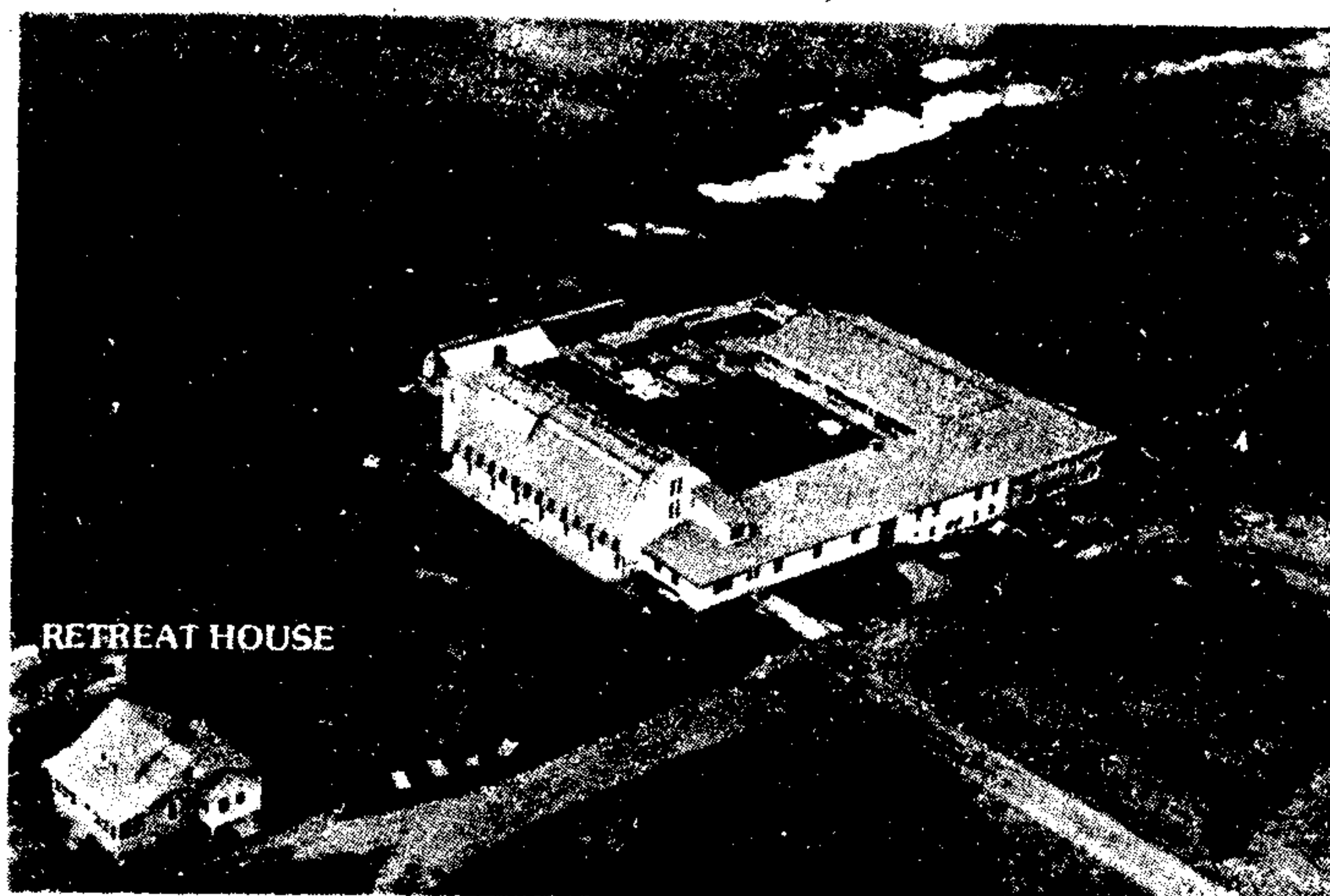
July 28, 1965, Swami Bhashyananda was appointed by the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission as the Swami-in-charge of the Chicago Vedanta Society.

From the beginning Swami Bhashyananda's work has been distinguished by vigorous expansion. Within a year the size of the congregation tripled, and he began looking for larger quarters. At first, he investigated the possibility of purchasing the Hale house where Swami Vivekananda had often stayed with the George W. Hale family, whom he termed, 'the sweetest influence of his life'. Despite the fact that the Ramakrishna Mission, the Government of India and U.S. Senator Douglas became actively interested in the matter, the Hale house was ultimately demolished to give way to a large apartment building which now occupies the space.

In the mean time, in order to accommodate the ever increasing attendance at the Sunday service, Swami Bhashyananda bought the present quarters at 5423 South Hyde Park Boulevard in Chicago, with the

assistance of a staunch devotee from New York, Chester Carlson (inventor of the Xerox). The neighbourhood was changing and unpredictable, but proximity to the University of Chicago was a good guarantee of permanence. The new temple was dedicated on 7 September 1966.

In 1967, a one storey building with a basement, located at 5407 South Hyde Park Boulevard, was acquired by the society, at a cost of \$35,000, and named 'Holy Mother's Cottage' to house women devotees who wished to lead a spiritual life. Lodging and board facilities were provided. Over the years, a large number of women devotees have taken advantage of this opportunity. For some time, the library of the Centre was located in the basement of this cottage; however, with the passing of time, the library grew until it was not possible to accommodate all the new books in this area. The basement was then converted into accommodations for the Sunday school for children and for a few lady guests. The library was shifted to the house just north of the Centre's building, which had been bought in 1970 and joined to the main building by



Temple Complex
 Shrine: Auditorium, Dining Hall, Museum &
 Supporting Functions; Ganges.

skillful carpentry in 1974. The library now has more than seven thousand five hundred volumes on important subjects which enrich human life and character.

The most dramatic expansion of the Society was the purchase in 1968 of eighty acres of land for a Monastery and Retreat in the township of Ganges, Michigan. The land first suggested for the monastery in 1967

...in a world of noise, confusion, and conflict, it is necessary that there be places of silence, inner discipline and peace; not the peace of mere relaxation but the peace of inner clarity and love based on ascetic renunciation.

was in Wisconsin, too far from Chicago. The search continued in Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. High prices eliminated Illinois land. Finally, Harry Greer, a long time member of the society's executive committee, discovered in Ganges Township, Michigan, two plots of land for sale: one of 160 and the other of 80 acres. Before the committee could decide, the larger plot was sold and so the 80 acre land was purchased. Later, a further 26 acres of land were acquired.

The ground-breaking ceremony was performed at noon on 15 May 1971. Present with Swami Bhashyananda were Swami Satprakashananda, then Founder-Head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, to perform the ceremony; Swami Prabuddhananda, head of the Vedanta Society of Northern California to assist him and Mr. Glen Overton—international Vedantin of more than fifty years—to witness the ceremony. Swami Satprakashananda presided, breaking the ground and laying the cornerstone of the first building.

The Monastery land, with fruit trees, garden, a small lake and stream, bee-hives,

farm acreage and farm animals, is restful to the eye and the mind. The retreat idea is one which is taking increasing hold on the minds of our modern generation. Sections of the Christian religion have for a long time used it, and perhaps never has its need been better voiced than by Thomas Merton, who said, 'in a world of noise, confusion, and conflict, it is necessary that there be places of silence, inner discipline and peace; not the peace of mere relaxation but the peace of inner clarity and love based on ascetic renunciation.' Sri Ramakrishna himself told the devotees, 'Whenever you have leisure, go into solitude for a day or two; at that time don't hold any conversation on worldly affairs; live either in solitude or in the company of the holy.' The Vivekananda Monastery and Retreat at Ganges township provides such an atmosphere in a non-sectarian context of reverence for all faiths, embodying the all-encompassing outlook of Sri Ramakrishna.

The Monastery has been progressively complemented by a remarkable group of buildings, built mainly by the monastics and their friends with supervision and help from several devotees, architects and engineers. The main quadrangle began with the large Temple at the southwest corner, in the shape of a graceful barn with a Gothic-arched roof, below which is the spacious library, and then, on the ground floor, the Chapel-cum-shrine with fine acoustics and ample room for the most elaborate Pujas, as also for Sunday services and week day classes.

Running north from the Temple is a connecting corridor, which branches out to the Bookstore, a large auditorium, and washrooms. The quadrangle's north wall comprises the major kitchen and two adjoining dining rooms (The larger one easily seats four hundred people). The western end of the quadrangle includes a large museum of India's art and artifacts with a section on Vivekananda and his legacy to the West.

This museum was largely helped by grants from the Government of India, in securing which Swami Ranganathananda (now senior Vice President of the Ramakrishna Order) was very instrumental. Through his support and assistance, the Government of India gave the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago grants totalling four lakh rupees, which were used to purchase Indian artifacts. Swami Vandanananda, the head of the New Delhi Ashrama, and Swami Srinathananda, assisted with the purchase and other arrangements for the shipment to America. The Government of India issued these grants with the idea that the Society establish a museum to share with the West the best of Indian culture and tradition.

Swami Ranganathananda also met the Chief Minister of the State of Madhya Pradesh in central India and obtained authorization to get seventy-five logs of teak which have been utilized in the panelling of the front of the Centre's building in Hyde Park and in the main structure at the Ganges Monastery and in the Shrine rooms both in Chicago and Ganges.

With such a setting, the Monastery and Retreat has become a major centre for use as devotional retreats, not only by devotees and friends but also by those of other Hindu groups and other world faiths. From the earliest work at 'Ganges', whose development he had so greatly helped, up through 1987, Swami Ranganathananda would break his round-the-world trips almost every May, for a major 'Festival' at Ganges; and gradually two others were added (one in mid-summer, the other in early autumn) which might well be called out-size Retreats! Then these began to alternate with major Conferences on vital religious topics, with noted speakers, panelists, etc.; and from about 1984, bi-monthly Hindu-Christian dialogues were begun, which in turn

merged into interfaith dialogue series in the Chicago area. Further, recently a healthy, growing Interfaith Dialogue Association has begun in nearby Grand Rapids, with encouragement and help from our 'Ganges' staff.

Again, in accord with Vivekananda's hope for 'annual' conferences of his monastics throughout America, Swami Bhashyananda convened the first two major efforts in this direction: in 1976, a 'Convention' in Ellicottville, New York, attended by nine Swamis of our Order plus about 350 devotees; the second, in 1987, at 'Ganges' with all the American Swamis represented, plus two from Europe, and Swami Ranganathananda from India, plus about 800 devotees. Then in 1993, just before the centennial of the Chicago World's Parliament of Religions, our Centre, now headed by Swami Chidananda, convened a third assembly: a Conference of the Heads of Centres at 'Ganges'. These three assemblages have been landmarks for the work in America and incidentally for Chicago; but also represent heavy responsibilities. Our Headquarters in India steadily encourages more of such; but as Chicago is so centrally located and has such convenient premises at 'Ganges', much of the expense and most of the organizing work falls on that Centre.

Swami Bhashyananda had always, till his recent 'strokes', travelled extensively, spreading the message of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Vedanta, while organizing groups and sub-Centres as desired locally. These devotees in turn tend to visit the home Centre and 'Ganges' often as individual and/or group Retreats. Further, several of these groups managed to persuade the Swami to 'loan' an American-born Swami; and in the 1980's several such were sent, by rotation, to Houston, Atlanta and Florida groups, till in early 1987 such assignments were suspended, to date. Meanwhile how-

ever, in Toronto, a group which the Swami plus Swami Ranganthananda had been instrumental in founding, grew strong

enough to obtain its own Minister-in-Charge in Swami Pramathananda, and is doing very well these last five years.

Part IV: Swami Chidananda

During September 1989, Swami Bhashyananda suffered the seventh and worst of a series of eight strokes that made it impossible for him to fulfil all the duties as Swami-in-charge; and so a request was sent to Belur Math for an assistant. In May 1991, Swami Chidananda came from India, to assist Swami Bhashyananda.

From the time of his arrival here, Swami Chidananda continues the activities and traditions along the lines established by Swami Bhashyananda, particularly stressing the morning and evening Aratis (vespers, devotional singing with waving of incense and lights, etc.), to which he usually adds songs for the day from his vast store of music from both north and south India. The tradition of the annual Children's Camp in 'Ganges' each summer also continues and expands.

1995 brought the following activities to fruition for the Chicago Vedanta Society: a plaque honouring Swami Vivekananda at the 1893 Parliament of Religions was duly installed and commemorated on 11 Septem-

ber 1995 at the Art Institute of Chicago (site of Swami Vivekananda's unprecedented triumph in 1893). This plaque was sponsored by the Vivekananda Vedanta Society, the Consul General of India, and the Art Institute. On 11 November 1995 the portion of Michigan Avenue directly in front of the Art Institute was renamed 'Swami Vivekananda Way'. Ceremonies of dedication were performed by Swami Chidananda and dignitaries from the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, the Art Institute, the Consulate of India and the Mayor's office took part. In order for the street to be renamed, a resolution had been sponsored and introduced at the City Council by a local Alderman. The resolution was passed by the City Council. Another resolution has also been sponsored and passed in the City Council to erect a ten-foot bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda that will be located either on the grounds of the Art Institute or in nearby Grant Park. The statue is being cast in India by the renowned firm of artists, G. Paul and sons. Dedication ceremonies were scheduled for 1996. □

The lower types of humanity in all nations find pleasure in the senses, while the cultured and the educated find it in thought, in philosophy, in arts and sciences. Spirituality is a still higher plane. The subject being infinite, that plane is the highest, and the pleasure there is the highest for those who can appreciate it.

—Swami Vivekananda

Indian Renaissance: Revivalism, Reformation and Syncretism

DR. SATISH K. KAPOOR

A scholarly survey of the melting-pot that India was in the last few centuries, getting ready, as it were, to receive the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda stood for.

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The health of a social organism grows out of the conflict between the challenges and the strength of its inner being to repulse them by way of adjustment, assimilation and self-development. In the case of cultural encounters between dominant and subordinated societies, it is the spirit of the latter which flutters to save itself from being gobbled up, and throws up in the process new personalities, ideas and trends to redeem its lost power and position.¹ India experienced such a climacterical phase in the nineteenth century.

Confronted by the Western civilization—mightier in its material and military prowess, steadfast in exerting acculturational pressures and vibrant with new ideas bequeathed to it by the Age of Enlightenment—India stood dazed and bewildered and lost contact with itself. Its body showed signs of fatigue and inertia, its mind anticipated the worst, but its spirit rose, like the mythical phoenix, from the ashes of despair, to proclaim its resurrection.

Indian renaissance symbolized the re-awakening of the spirit of the nation—it stood as much for its assertion as for its efflorescence. It was born of the interaction between a number of factors and forces, ideas and institutions which characterized the milieu created by the British Raj, or were born as a challenge to it. The impact of the Western system of education, the re-discovery of India's glorious past, the rationalist outlook of David Hare and Derozio, the role of unofficial westernizing agencies such as the press and the missionaries, the social and administrative policies of the British government, the Evangelical movement of William Wilberforce and Charles Grant, and the scathing attacks of Utilitarians and Baptists on Indian life and thought—these were the factors that stirred up the Indian conscience and helped to awaken its dormant spirit.²

Indian renaissance has been seen both as a revival of tradition and rejection of it. Its

1. For a fuller explanation of this idea see A.J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. II (New York, 1969), pp. 163–285, passim; Aurobindo Ghosh, *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (Pondicherry, 1980), pp. 385–94.

2. See R.C. Majumdar, *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance* (vol. X, part II of *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Bombay, 1965); pp. 89–96; Percival Spear, *The Oxford History of India* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 273–84; Wm Theodore de Bary (compiler), *Sources of Indian Tradition* (Delhi, 1963), pp. 602–04.

intonations were heard in Bengal,³ the first province to come under the British yoke. But it spread into other parts in an uneven fashion. It revealed itself first, to the intellectuals and the middle classes, and then to the common man. In some areas it influenced only the elite. Its manifestation was apparent in various fields ranging from literature and fine arts to politics and religion. Rooted in

came under severe attack from men of scientific temper.⁴

Since two historical situations differing in time and place can never be quite similar, it may not be appropriate to regard the Indian renaissance as analogous to its western counterpart. The former was more or less universal, the latter individualistic; the one

Since two historical situations differing in time and place can never be quite similar, it may not be appropriate to regard the Indian renaissance as analogous to its western counterpart. The former was more or less universal, the latter individualistic; the one conducted itself through the spirit, the other through the spectrum of the mind; the one laid faith in rita and satya, the sense of a cosmic order, the latter in vijñana, a quest for material progress; the one broadened out in the struggle for freedom, the latter in a 'full romanticism'.

India's historical past, it received a stimulus from the Western spirit of science and reason, and looked to a glorious future sans accretion and alien touch.

In Europe, the renaissance had brought about a revival of classical learning, the Greco-Roman heritage, fostered the growth of science and vernacular literature, developed a rational approach towards life, and generated an inquisitive spirit among the people which led to new explorations and discoveries. Self-expressionism of the Middle Ages gave way to individualism; literature and art yearned to be free from the ecclesiastical tutelage; theological studies were substituted by the study of ideas in different areas, and dogmas of the Church

conducted itself through the spirit, the other through the spectrum of the mind; the one laid faith in *rita* and *satya*, the sense of a cosmic order, the latter in *vijñana*, a quest for material progress; the one broadened out in the struggle for freedom, the latter in a 'full romanticism'.⁵

It is not possible to include, in one taxonomic matrix, all the religious trends that were current in nineteenth century India. Although they were conceived in the collective unconscious of the nation as a result of the penetration of European influence, each trend epitomized an ego-ideal which was thought to be supreme and infallible (e.g. the Arya Samaj believed in the ideal, *krinvanto vishwa aryam*, i.e. Aryanize the World).

3. For a critical analysis see Abdul Mazed Khan, *The Transition in Bengal, 1756-75: A Study of Saiyad Muhammad Reza Khan* (Cambridge, 1969); David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization* (Berkley and Los Angeles, 1969).

4. See the author's review article, 'Transition in Europe', *The Tribune*, 13 February 1982.

Broadly speaking, the Indian psyche underwent six different phases. First, it experienced what the psychologists would describe as a culture-shock—'a sort of collective historical syndrome' or a state of epi-

5. The phrase is borrowed from Trenchard Cox, *The Renaissance in Europe* (London, 1933), p. xix.

lepsy.

After regaining its balance, it oscillated between curiosity and interest in the alien, and an innate prejudice towards it. Delusions of persecution at the hands of the dominant culture also reigned supreme.

Later, attraction often took the form of imitation, and prejudice turned into repulsion for everything western. This led, on the one hand, to a bizarre craze for 'a successful reproduction of Europe in India,...to become like it, or partly like it',⁶ and an attempt to stem this tide on the other.

The next phase was marked by introspection and introversion, which underlined the need for a defence mechanism to safeguard Indian society and religion against internal as well as external odds.

new ideas from time to time.⁷

II

The tendency to harp on the past—for inspiration, guidance or other purposes—is ingrained in all societies. It vociferously expresses itself when the national psyche is pregnant with new ideas or faced with challenges. Sometime, revivalism stems from the human propensity to cleanse or white-wash the heritage, and embellish it to suit new conditions. Just as the human mind is often caught in the quagmire of good and evil, the mind of a social organism oscillates between the urge to adopt the new and move ahead, and the tendency to cling to the past. The former is characteristic of juvenility, the latter of possessiveness; the one has speed without vision, the other has vision without speed; the one helps the society to grow up like a *Cuscuta reflexa*—oblivious of

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This led to reformation at various levels in different parts of the country. The multiple character of Indian personality sparked off responses with varying intensity and character—mild as well as stoical, principled as well as preposterous.

The dialectical interplay between revivalist and reformist currents led to an awareness that the assimilable aspects of Western life and thought ought to be submerged in the mainstream of Indian heritage—not for creating 'a bastard or tow-natured culture' but for preserving one's identity. After all, as Aurobindo Ghosh rightly said, a living organism cannot grow 'in a virgin isolation'; it must enrich itself with

its roots, the other makes it appear like a garden cacti—beautiful but useless. Both the tendencies assert themselves at one time or another. Societies which have grown without bothering about their past are now vainly in search of the roots, while others with roots in by-gone times are hysterically struggling to look taller.

The European renaissance looked back to the Bible and Aristotle, the French revolutionaries to the polity of Greece and Rome, the Manchus to the classics of Confucius,

6. See Aurobindo Ghosh, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

7. Ibid. pp. 386–7. See also K.K. Datta, 'Our Cultural Renaissance and Nationalism' in *The Spirit of India*, vol. II, pp. 295–300. The volumes were published in London (1976) by the Indira Gandhi Abhinandan Samiti.

and the Maiji regime to the principles of Shinto. In a similar vein, the leaders of Indian renaissance went back to the pristine truths of their religions: Ram Mohan to the Upanishads, Dayananda to the Vedas, Bankim Chandra Chatterji to the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata*, Muslim reformers to the *Quran*, the Parsis to the *Avesta*, and the Sikhs to the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Ironically, the validity of Indian heritage was first asserted by the British Indologists like Holwell, Halhed, Alexander Dow, Charles Wilkins and others.⁸

Revivalism appeared to be an essential antidote when the tide of Western ideas was eroding the basis of Indian ethos, when prominent Britons like Charles Grant and E. Ryan were working for the anglicization of natives, and when Lord Macaulay's dream

soaked in myths, superstitions and rituals. Some of them boasted that they dreamed in English. In one case, a student of Hindu College, Calcutta, accosted the Goddess Kali in a temple muttering: 'Good Morning, Madam.'⁹ Beef-eating and drinking came to be regarded as the hallmarks of modernity and a higher culture. Some believed that the East had been static through the ages and that it would remain so for centuries to come. But they forgot the odd dictum of the universality of change, the immanence of being, and the transience of everything but change itself.¹⁰

The revivalists gave a jolt to this new class of educated Indians whose craze for everything Western bordered on schizophrenia. They discovered the substratum of Indian culture, laid out its ideational content

Indian culture was derided, even disowned by them. They came to believe with Utilitarians that the light from the West alone could irradiate the Indian mind soaked in myths, superstitions and rituals. Some of them boasted that they dreamed in English. In one case, a student of Hindu College, Calcutta, accosted the Goddess Kali in a temple muttering: 'Good Morning, Madam.' Beef-eating and drinking came to be regarded as the hallmarks of modernity and a higher culture.

of creating a class of people who were Indian in blood but English in tastes, manners and intellectual outlook was turning into a reality, at least among the educated youth of Bengal. Indian culture was derided, even disowned by them. They came to believe with Utilitarians that the light from the West alone could irradiate the Indian mind

by separating the grain from the chaff, and emphasized the historical fact of its past glory. The roots of the Utilitarianism were seen in *Shukraniti*, of democratic polity in the *Atharva-Veda*, and the *Ramayana*, and of rationalism in the six systems of Indian philosophy. Hinduism was described as the mother of religions, and Sanskrit as the mother of languages. The cult of Lord Krishna was revived to provide the Hindus with an enviable substitute for Christ. Against the intellectual greatness of the Apostolic age and the Age of Christological

8. For details see P.J. Marshall (ed.), *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the 18th Century* (Cambridge, 1970), Introduction. See also the author's two articles entitled 'Hinduism that had once appeared devilish now came to be described as human and sometimes divine' *The Times of India*, 1 November 1981; 'A people who have been an ornament to creation' *The Times of India*, 8 November 1981.

9. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 46, 90.

10. See the author's review article, 'Indian Tradition Through Indian Eye', *The Tribune*, 14 May 1983.

Councils came the glorious Vedic period. 'Kalidasa, the great Sanskrit dramatist, was first hailed as the Shakespeare of India; later when the Hindu renaissance became more aggressive, Shakespeare was called the Kalidasa of Britain.'¹¹

Since religion and sociology were not as clearly distinguished in the nineteenth century as in our own times, social customs

'Kalidasa, the great Sanskrit dramatist, was first hailed as the Shakespeare of India; later when the Hindu renaissance became more aggressive, Shakespeare was called the Kalidasa of Britain.'

were enforced on the ground of religious sanction.¹² Hence revivalism and reformation remained intertwined in the process of rejuvenation of the country.

A number of religious trends aiming at revival or reform may be delineated at this stage:

Revivalism through reform by way of reason, as represented by the Brahmo Samaj;

Reform through revivalism in a militant way, as represented by the Arya Samaj and the Neo-Hindus (Krishna-prasanna Sen, Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Nabin Chandra Sen and Bhudev Mukhopadhyay);

Reform without revival, as represented by the Derozians;

Revival, reconstruction and innovation, in a synthetic way, as represented by the Ramakrishna Mission;

Esoteric revivalism and reform, as represented by the Theosophical society;

Conservative revivalism, making an apology for the entire gamut of Indian tradition with its mythopoeia and rationale, as represented by Professor Sundararaman, Raj Narain Bose, Nab Gopal Mitra and others;

Atheism, guru cult and reforms, as represented by the Deva Samaj;

Sectarian revivalism, as represented by the Madhvas and the Shri Vaishnava sect in South India, the Chaitanya cult and the New Krishna movement in Bengal, the Advaita Sabha in Kumbhakonam, the many Shaiva societies in South India; and the Kukas and the Nirankaris in the Punjab; Minority-revivalism and reform, as reflected in the socio-religious upheavals among Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, Jains and others;

and finally, reactionary and retrogressive waves as represented by the Dharma Sabha (founded in 1830 to oppose the Brahmo Samaj), Hindu Dharma Vyavasthapaka Mandali (founded in 1860 to oppose the Widow Remarriage Association), and the Sanatan Dharma Sabha (founded in 1895 to oppose the Arya Samaj).¹³

One may also discern trends within

13. For a general survey see J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (New Delhi, 1967), pp. 430-45; B.N. Pandey, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-53; Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-156; A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Bombay, 1965), pp. 281-306; Haridas Bhattacharya (ed.), *The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. IV (Calcutta, 1956), pp. 613-728.

See also C.H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform* (Princeton, 1964); Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. II (Princeton, 1966); P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge, 1972); Kenneth W. Jones, 'Communalism in the Punjab: The Arya Samaj Contribution', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. XVIII (1968); Kenneth W. Jones,

11. B.N. Pandey, *The Break-up of British India* (New York, 1969), p. 30.

12. *The Indian Social Reformer*, 8 December 1894.

trends emerging as auxiliaries or erupting as smallpox to disfigure the parent body. The nature of the socio-religious organizations depended upon the quality of the leaders they possessed in different periods of time. Interestingly enough, the preceptors of some cults, viz. Keshava¹⁴ and Shiva Narain Agnihotri¹⁵, proclaimed their own prophet-hood.

Reformers and revivalists differed in their diagnosis of the obsolescent in Indian religion and society. What sounded radical to Keshab Chandra Sen was the point of departure for Devendranath Tagore. What was rational for the theosophists seemed somewhat preposterous to the Deva Samajis. Swami Dayananda ridiculed the Puranic Hinduism as fallacious. But Pandit Sasadhar justified it in all its ramifications. Ritualism, idolatry and caste distinctions were condemned by some (Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj, Singh Sabhas of Amritsar and Lahore, Nirankaris, and some Christians and Muslim movements) but wilfully justified by the Sanatana Dharma Sabhas. The Brahminical custom of keeping a *shikha*—the tuft of hair on the occiput—was described both as a superfluity and as a means of conserving electricity in the body

(see for example the theosophist version of it)¹⁶.

The Arya Samajists thought that the revival of cow worship and *yajnas* could become the planks of national unity, but many Hindu reformers and minority sects interpreted them as retrogressive.¹⁷ Sir Syed Ahmad Khan spoke bitterly against the evils of polygamy, purdah and divorce in Muslim society. But he had to face opposition from many quarters including the Ahmadiyas.¹⁸ Ram Mohan regarded *sati* as symptomatic of the moral debasement of a race which was capable of doing better things. But he found formidable opponents in Pandit Raghunandan and Parivrajaka Krishnaprasanna (later Swami Krishnananda), who tried to prove that the custom had a Vedic sanction (*Rig-Veda*, x.16).¹⁹ It is well known how Ram Mohan debunked their arguments by publishing two tracts in 1818 and 1820, and making petitions to the East India Company. During Lord William Bentinck's period he got it abolished by law.

Interpretations between different ideologies and groups led to some historic debates on a number of social and religious questions. Ram Mohan's arguments with Baptists and Trinitarians (Joshua Marsh-

'The Bengali Elite in Post-Annexation Punjab: An example of Inter-regional Influence in 19th century India', in David Kopf (ed.), *Bengal Regional Identity* (Michigan, 1969); *The Punjab, Past and Present*, vol. VII, part I, April 1973, Punjabi University, Patiala.

14. A dynamic leader of the Brahmo Samaj who broke away from the parent organization in 1865. Later he organized a new church known as *Navavidhan Samaj* (The New Dispensation), in which he was regarded a prophet.

15. A Kanauji Brahmin of U.P. (born in 1850 in the Kanpur district) who founded the Deva Samaj at Lahore in 1887.

16. See B.N. Datta, *Swami Vivekananda: Patriot-Prophet* (Calcutta, 1954), p. 67.

17. Swami Dayananda's *Satyarth Prakash*, III/20-22, IV/44, X.18. See also Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharma: Hindu Consciousness in 19th Century Punjab* (New Delhi, 1976), pp. 152-3.

18. B.N. Lunia, *Evolution of Indian Culture* (Agra, 1960), p. 665.

19. B.N. Datta, *op. cit.*, pp. 22, 38; Donald H. Bishop (ed.), *Thinkers of the Indian Renaissance* (New Delhi, 1982), p. 20. See also J.C. Ghosh, *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, 4 vols. (New Delhi, 1982). It is a reprint of the earlier edition published in 1906.

man, Deocar Schmidt, William Yates and William Adam), Swami Dayananda's *shastrarthas* with the leaders of orthodoxy, Syed Ahmed Khan's discussions with fundamentalists among the Muslims, Pāndit Shukhlal's polemics with Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid, and Swami Vivekananda's eloquent orations in the West (sometimes in response to cynical questions on Indian religion and society)—all these were a clear pointer to the fact that India was undergoing a period of transition, from faith to reason, complacency to activity, and servility to strength.

The limitations of argument, like the limitations of thought, were however, not realized by some reformers, whose wild enthusiasm for the revival of ancient heritage made them vulnerable to missionary attacks. Swami Dayananda tried to prove that the Vedas carried the germs of all sciences, and that modern scientific feats such as the invention of the steam engines, railways or steam boats were known to the seers of yore.²⁰ The Bengali poet, Nabin Chandra, interpreted the Puranas in the light of Western science and humanism.²¹ Another scholar, M.N. Dutt, provided a rational basis to the abstruse aspects of the Tantric lore in his Introduction to the *Mahanirvana Tantra*.²² Sri Ramakrishna justified idolatry by alluding to the psychological quest of human beings for signs and symbols.²³ The theosophists made the occult look like a science.²⁴

20. See Max Muller, *Rammohan to Ramakrishna* (Calcutta, 1952), p. 74; Har Bilas Sarda (ed.), *Dayananda Commemoration Volume* (Ajmer, 1933), pp. 201–04.

21. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

22. Ibid. p. 136.

23. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translator: Swami Nikhilananda, (Madras, 1969), pp. 266, 282.

24. See H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (Madras, 1893), pp. 42–52, 69–93, 133–50, *passim*.

It is to be noted that some reformers ridiculed the social evils on moral grounds, but, in the same vein, vindicated their position by quoting from relevant scriptures. Ram Mohan challenged his opponents to prove that the Hindu customs—those that were abominable—had a Vedic sanction. Likewise, he made a plea for intercaste marriages on the basis of the *Mahanirvana Tantra*. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar culled out extracts from the *Rig-Veda*, *Atharva-Veda*, *Manu-Samhita* and *Vishnu Samhita* to prove that, in ancient India, widows were not debarred from getting married again. Swami Dayananda's crusade against child marriage was based on the authority of *Sushruta-Samhita* which warns that if a girl conceived before the age of sixteen, there was a possible risk of miscarriage or the birth of a weak child. The Swami further argued, on the basis of the *Dharmashastra* of Apastamba, that 'the twice-born classes should have their food cooked by *shudras*.'²⁵

The socio-religious reform movements had something for all—a near-scientific religion for the educated and a set of do's and don'ts for the common man (compare, for example, Deva Samaj's conceptions of a human, life and progress based on Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, Herbert Spencer's evolutionism and the works of British Empiricists, with its guru cult). Most of them were progressive as well as fundamentalists, revivalist as well as reformist. It may not be proper to describe them as totally reactionary or totally progressive. Even the fundamentalist movements among various sects (Hindu, Sikh, Parsi, Jaina, etc.) could not remain impervious to western influence, and even the strictly rational like the Brahmo Samaj could not help being revivalistic. Even within the

25. Bimanbihari Majumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas: From Rammohan to Dayananda* (Calcutta, 1967), pp. 20–1.

same organization one can discern an interaction between opposing views and attitudes of members and leadership.

It is not difficult to identify these organizations with their respective communities, as they begin with words such as *Brahmo*, *Arya*, *Prarthana*, *Deva*, *Sanatan*, *Singh*, *Khalsa*, *Rohnumai*, *Ahmadiya*, *Aligarh*, *Faraizi*, *Deoband*, etc. Most of them confined their activities to one or more of these issues: caste, widow remarriage, polygamy, education or untouchability. Only a few like, the Ramakrishna Mission, endeavoured to overhaul the society by shifting emphasis from reforms to a change in values and attitudes of people. Sectarian reform societies such as Sanatan Dharma Rakshini Sabha (estd. Calcutta, 1873) and Ubhaya Vedanta Pravartaka Sabha (estd. by the Vaishnavas in 1906) were concerned mainly with the welfare of their own group. As their activities were self-centric, they could not evolve a national outlook.

The lighter aspect of these trends is equally instructive. Some reformers aimed at bringing about national unity, but failed even to save their own organization from division. They pleaded for the democratization of social and religious institutions, but remained autocratic in their group. Movements opposed to the observance of rituals evolved their own, with the passage of time. New idols and gods replaced the old. Reformers spoke glibly of reforms in public meetings but remained virtually unchanged in their personal lives. The untouchables were still not touched; the priests continued to be the objects of veneration; and the common masses looked agape at the reformers for a solution to their economic needs.

III

Whereas the tendency towards a reconciliation between the old and the new, the East and the West, was more perceptible and

developed in some, it was completely absent in others. The first attempt in this direction was made by Ram Mohan, whose attitude towards the West was not that of 'withdrawal, surrender or conflict' but that of comprehension. 'Synthesis, which is different from syncretism, was his remedy for the predicament of Hinduism.'²⁶ Neither a blind adherent nor an arch foe of the Indian tradition, he believed in making a reappraisal of it from removing the cobwebs of accretions clustering around it. He was to the Indian renaissance what Luther and Melanchthon were to the German reformation. His contribution lay as much in injecting fresh life and vigour into the dry bones of Indian society as in championing the cause of western education. He has been rightly hailed as 'India's Columbus in the discovery of a new continent of truth'.²⁷

Once the wheels of renaissance were set in motion, attempts at the coalescence of ideas followed in quick succession. Among them were: reason and intuition by Devendranath Tagore; science and Vedic beliefs by Swami Dayananda; psychology and the occult by Annie Besant; tradition and social reform by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Justice Ranade; Vedanta and nationalism by Aurobindo, Tilak and others; religious revivalism and political extremism by Bankim Chandra; the spirit of Islam and that of the West by Syed Ahmad Khan; Gurbani and modern outlook by Singh Sabhas; and so on. Keshab's attempt to synthesize Christian theology and Hindu devotional practices degenerated into a vague eclecticism, and met the same fate as Akbar's *Din-i-Ilahi*.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Indian response to the western challenge had come full circle from weak resistance,

26. Percival Spear, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

27. Cited in V.S. Narvane, *Modern Indian Thought* (Bombay, 1967), p. 22.

abject surrender and blind imitation to self-examination, re-discovery of latent powers, and a renewed faith in oneself. It has been rightly observed that 'if Ram Mohan was the mind, Dayanand the physical arm, Ramakrishna was the soul of the new India.'²⁸ The Ramakrishna Mission marked the climax and convergence of a number of forces which had been endeavouring to awaken the dormant spirit of India for more than a century.

The spirit of Sri Ramakrishna soared high through his disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), who raised the image of India in the eyes of the West by his wonderful exposition of Hinduism at the Chicago Parliament of Religions. 'After hearing him we feel how foolish we are to send missionaries to this learned nation,' wrote an American paper.²⁹ In India, he championed the rights of people irrespective of their caste, colour, creed or sex, spoke against the privileges of priests and opulent sections of society, and ridiculed the touch-me-notism in Hinduism. 'We are neither Vedantists, nor Pauranics nor Tantrics. We are just "don't touchists". Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking pot.'³⁰ He advocated muscles of iron and nerves made of steel for building up a new India.³¹

28. Percival Spear, *op. cit.* p. 287.

29. Cited in *The Indian Mirror*, 27 December 1893.

30. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. III (Calcutta, 1970), p. 167.

31. *Ibid.* vol. V, p. 117.

His message to the nation was the service of God through man.³² 'Where shall you go to seek for God? Are not all the poor, the miserable, the weak gods?' he asked.³³

Swami Vivekananda felt that the cause of India's downfall was that she had gone into her shell, as the oyster does, and refused to give as well as take. The solution lay in combining the heart of a Buddha with the mind of a Newton. By creating a bridge between modernity and tradition, rationalism and superstition, science and mysticism, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, he harmonized the heterogeneous strands of thought, and set into motion, the process of acculturation between the East and the West.

In the course of conflict between cultures the worn-out elements fell, and the best of the other is consciously or unconsciously assimilated. No culture, not even the one which is dying, wants to follow the footsteps of the pharaohs of Egypt or the cults of Celtic or teutonic antiquity. Goaded by 'the very instinct of life' the leaders of Indian renaissance remained busy in their quest for identity, on the one hand, and a repudiation of the redundant, on the other. Syncretism, the reconciliation of different sometime opposing principles, or synthesis which moulds them all in the crucible of time towards a unified entity, was not the cause by the culmination of their efforts. □

32. *Ibid.* vol. III, pp. 142, 391.

33. *Ibid.* vol. V, p. 15.

This assertion...this proving that man is not a machine, is the essence of all religious thought, it is impossible to think it in the routine mechanical way. It is this tendency to bring everything down to the level of a machine that has given the West its wonderful prosperity. And it is this which has driven away all religion from its doors.

—Swami Vivekananda, Letter dated 15 March 1894

Subhash Chandra Bose on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, whose centenary birthday is on the 23rd of this month, was intensely devoted to the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The following compilation, taken from My India, The India Eternal, published by The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta, shows the depth of Netaji's personal feelings regarding them, and also his views on their relevance to India's progress.

In the eighties of the last century, two prominent religious personalities appeared before the public, who were destined to have a great influence on the future course of the new awakening. They were Ramakrishna Paramahansa... and his disciple Swami Vivekananda.... Ramakrishna preached the gospel of the unity of all religions and urged the cessation of inter-religious strife.... Before he died, he charged his disciple with the task of propagating his religious teachings in India and abroad and of bringing about an awakening among his countrymen.

Swami Vivekananda therefore founded the Ramakrishna Mission, an order of monks, to live and preach the Hindu religion in its purest form in India and abroad, especially in America, and he took an active part in inspiring every form of healthy nationalism. He tried to infuse into the new generation a sense of pride in India's past, of faith in India's future, and a spirit of self-confidence and self-respect.

Though the Swami never gave any political message, every one who came into contact with him or his writings developed a spirit of patriotism and a political mentality. So far at least as Bengal is concerned, Swami Vivekananda may be regarded as the spiritual father of the modern nationalist movement. He died very young in 1902, but

since his death his influence has been even greater.¹

I cannot write about Vivekananda without going into raptures. Few indeed could comprehend or fathom him—even among those who had the privilege of becoming intimate with him. His personality was rich, profound and complex, and it was this personality—as distinct from his teachings and writings—which accounts for the wonderful influence he has exerted on his countrymen and particularly on Bengalees. This is the type of manhood which appeals to the Bengalees as probably none other. Reckless in his sacrifice, unceasing in his activity, boundless in his love, profound and versatile in his wisdom, exuberant in his emotions, merciless in his attacks but yet simple as a child—he was a rare personality in this world of ours....

Swamiji was a full-blooded masculine personality—and a fighter to the core of his being. He was consequently a worshipper of Shakti and gave a practical interpretation to the Vedanta for the uplift of his countrymen.... I can go on for hours and yet fail to do the slightest justice to that great man. He was so great, so profound, so complex. A Yogi of the highest spiritual level in direct

1. *The Indian Struggle* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 21.

communion with Truth, who had for the time being consecrated his whole life to the moral and spiritual uplift of his nation and of humanity—that is how I would describe him. If he had been alive, I would have been at his feet. Modern Bengal is his creation—if I err not.²

How shall I express in words my indebtedness to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda? It is under their sacred influence that my life got first awakened. Like Nivedita I also regard Ramakrishna and Vivekananda as two aspects of one indivisible personality. If Swamiji had been alive today, he would have been my Guru, that is to say, I would have accepted him as my Master. It is needless to add, however, that as long as I live, I shall be absolutely loyal and devoted to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.³

It is very difficult to explain the versatile genius of Swami Vivekananda. The impact Swami Vivekananda made on the students of our times by his works and speeches far outweighed that made by any other leader of the country. He, as it were, expressed fully their hopes and aspirations. [But] Swamiji cannot be appreciated properly if he is not studied along with Sri Sri Paramahansa Deva.

The foundations of the present freedom movement owes its origin to Swamiji's message. If India is to be free, it cannot be a land specially of Hinduism or of Islam—it must be one united land of different religious communities inspired by the ideal of nationalism. [And for that,] Indians must accept whole-heartedly the gospel of harmony of religions, which is the gospel of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda....

Swamiji harmonized East and West, religion and science, past and present. And that is why he is great. Our countrymen have gained unprecedented self-respect, self-confidence and self-assertion from his teachings.⁴

The harmony of all religions which Ramakrishna Paramahansa accomplished in his life's endeavour, was the keynote of Swamiji's life. And this idea, again, is the bed-rock of the nationalism of Future India. Without this concept of harmony of religions and toleration of all creeds, the spirit of national consciousness could not have been built up in this country of ours full of diversities.

The aspiration for freedom manifested itself in various movements since the time of Rammohan Roy. This aspiration was witnessed in the realm of thought and in social reforms during the nineteenth century, but it was never expressed in the political sphere. This was because the people of India still remained sunk in the stupor of subjugation and thought that the conquest of India by the British was an act of Divine Dispensation. The idea of complete freedom is manifest only in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda towards the end of the nineteenth century. 'Freedom, freedom is the song of the Soul'—this was the message that burst forth from the inner recesses of Swamiji's heart and captivated and almost maddened the entire nation. This truth was embodied in his works, life, conversations, and speeches.

Swami Vivekananda, on the one hand, called man to be real man, freed from all fetters, and, on the other, laid the foundation for true nationalism in India by preaching the gospel of the harmony of religions.⁵

2. *Prabuddha Bharata*, July 1932, p. 352.

3. *Udbodhan*, Ashwin 1354 (Bengali Year), p. 459.

4. *Ibid.* Phalgun 1337 (Bengali Year), p. 70.

5. *Nutaner Sandhan*, Calcutta, pp. 24–6.

Sister Nivedita's Okakura Connection and Swami Vivekananda

DR. MAMATA RAY & DR. ANIL BARAN RAY

Dr. Mamata Ray, lecturer in Political Science, Visva-Bharati University and her husband Dr. Anil Baran Ray, Professor of Political Science, Burdwan University, have combined their efforts to present an interesting study of Sister Nivedita, her friendship with Mr. Kakuso Okakura, the Japanese artist with a common interest in the political freedom of India. The point of time of this event is interesting in that it occurred in 1902, the year of Swami Vivekananda's (her revered guru's) mahasamadhi.

Background

At the call of her Master, Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita (born Margaret Elizabeth Noble of Ireland in 1867, and initiated as Sister Nivedita of the Ramakrishna Order by Swami Vivekananda in March 1898) came from England to India in January 1898 to work primarily for the education of women in India. Having seen the dimensions of the British rule in India, she became convinced, as early as October 1901, that the British rule in India produced nothing but 'moral degradation' and 'despicable enervation'¹, and that anybody who entertained a political opinion to the effect that India required a foreign rule committed a blasphemy against Humanity'.² As one who had the experience of working with the 'Free Ireland' group in England, Nivedita believed that something should be done towards ridding India of foreign domination. Such was the background and the context in which Nivedita came into contact in March 1902 with the Japanese artist Kakuso Okakura³, a man with revolutionary lean-

ings, who felt as strongly as Nivedita that India should so organize itself that it could throw the British out of India.

A New Friendship Begins

Prior to 1902, Nivedita was in correspondence with Okakura at the instance of Josephine MacLeod, who happened to be the common friend of both Nivedita and Okakura. Okakura came to India in January 1902 to take Swami Vivekananda to Japan to address a religious assembly of the type the great Master addressed in Chicago in September 1893. That was the immediate purpose. But that Okakura had 'another' purpose too in his mind would be seen from his later activities in India. As Swamiji was gravely ill at that time, he could not make the trip to Japan. This visit of Okakura's gave Nivedita a chance to meet the man she had known so far only through correspondence. The longing of Nivedita for meeting Okakura could be seen from one of the letters she wrote at this time:

I long to see him (Okakura)—I care nothing for his knowledge—or his prestige—or anything. I want to sound his will—to measure the depth of his soul—to hear from him at what point a people's thirst for life should cease. I think, I trust, I shall have an answer to

1. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, ed. Sankari Prasad Basu (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1982), vol. 1, p. 447. [Hereafter *Letters*.]

2. *Ibid.*

3. Yasuka Horioka, 'Okakura and Swami Vivekananda's Disciples', *Prabuddha Bharata*, January, March 1975 and March 1977.

(what) so far I have failed to get from (him) successful(ly).⁴

The longed-for meeting between the two took place in Calcutta in March 1902, when Okakura, at the end of a pilgrimage to

Their political interactions resulted in the formation of a revolutionary group in Calcutta, with Nivedita, Okakura and Surendranath Tagore as its leading members.

Bodh-Gaya and Benares in the company of Swami Vivekananda, came back to Calcutta. The meeting resulted in a friendship which led to their combined enterprises in the scholarly and political fields.

Political Involvement

Their political interactions resulted in the formation of a revolutionary group in Calcutta, with Nivedita, Okakura and Surendranath Tagore as its leading members.⁵ To quote Lizelle Raymond:

The two men (Okakura and Surendranath) were working with their friends to establish chains of secret societies—to arouse the Hindus' political sense—in the Northern Provinces.... Nivedita found the work astonishingly similar to what she herself had been doing seven years before, among the Irish in England.⁶

To the extent that they believed that freedom was really the work for India, they, with their revolutionary leanings, were all one in their goal. The following letter of Nivedita, addressed to Miss MacLeod, bears

evidence to the mutual adoration and friendship of these people:

Freedom is really the work.... This man (Okakura) that you have given us is noble through and through!⁷

That Nivedita's own admiration for Okakura at about this time almost verged on worship could be seen from her thoughts as expressed in her letters:

I am alone, and yet not alone, for another's heart and brain and eyes have been at my service for 6 weeks. And my vision is not my own now, it includes that also. I do not command my own strength only, for a patient hand has laboured to give me a touching advantage in a people's love, and my own consciousness of it. I feel an intimate strength within me.⁸

I could only say that I was prepared to take all the inspiration that a new individual could give me, whatever his race or habits.⁹

He (Okakura) loves Suren, what a wonderful nature he has, for loving those whom he teaches! No wonder he has strong men for his disciples!¹⁰

He (Okakura) is worshipped by all who really know him. Amongst the boys at Ballygunge there is a myth afloat that he is Khalki, of whom so many things are said.... The boys call Nigu (Okakura) 'Krishna' too.¹¹

Nivedita's letters unfold the total iden-

4. *Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 457–8.

5. *Swami Vivekananda, Patriot-Prophet*, Bhupendranath Dutta.

6. *The Dedicated*, Lizelle Reymond, p. 260.

7. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 477; letter dated 7 July 1902.

8. *Ibid.* pp. 461–2.

9. *Ibid.* p. 463.

10. *Ibid.* p. 488; letter dated 23 July 1902.

11. *Ibid.* pp. 502–03; letter dated 10 September 1902.

tification she had with the revolutionary work that Okakura and his followers such as Surendranath Tagore had set out to do. The letters also reveal the intimate personal relations she had developed with Okakura in the period between March 1902 when she

Nivedita's letters make it abundantly clear that Miss Josephine MacLeod supplied the money for carrying out such activities. To Miss MacLeod, love for Vivekananda meant love for India and love for anything that served the cause of India.

first met him and October 1902 when Okakura left India for Japan. Referring to the 'revolution-raising' tour through India that Okakura and Surendranath were to undertake on and from 2 August 1902, Nivedita writes:

On Saturday (August 2, 1902) they (Okakura and Surendranath) leave for a month's travel, and my heart always sinks a little, for you know such a journey is not without its evil chances for him. I am glad to have him tomorrow, in order to send him off with full prayers. I always say that if only he goes safely home this time, I do not mind next, but for the present he is a guest, and not free to be killed!¹²

Referring to Okakura's return from his tour, Nivedita writes:

He and Suren have seen India and returned. What have they not done? Everything. We can see our way now.¹³

Nigu (Okakura) and S. (Suren) came back as I told you having done all and more. You know that passionate longing to serve even the least so you do not need

to be told how he had been used.¹⁴

Discerning readers will recognize from these quotes of Nivedita's letters as well as from other letters of hers written during this period (March—October 1902) that Nivedita nowhere mentions Okakura by name. She refers to him variously, reflecting thereby her anxiety to keep the identity of Okakura secret from the police. True to her training in the secret revolutionary work that she had undergone as a member of the secret Irish revolutionary organizations in London (prior to her meeting Swami Vivekananda in London in 1895), she never gave out in her letters the details of the exact revolutionary work that Okakura and others were doing in India in 1902.

Nivedita's letters make it abundantly clear that Miss Josephine MacLeod supplied the money for carrying out such activities. To Miss MacLeod, love for Vivekananda meant love for India and love for anything that served the cause of India. It was she who was instrumental in bringing Okakura to India and it was she who supplied all the money to Nivedita which she used for the purpose of financing the work of Okakura. While there are numerous references to this in Nivedita's letters, none makes it as explicit as the following one:

About this £ 210. Had you forgotten that I have a balance of nearly 2000 Rupees of yours still? It was nearly 3000, but I gave Nigu (Okakura) another 1000, a week or two ago.

Even if you never saw that money again, it wd. (would) have been well spent. Anything that makes his work here possible is well spent.¹⁵

13. Ibid. p. 500; letter dated 4 September 1902.

14. Ibid. p. 501; letter dated 10 September 1902.

15. Ibid. p. 495; letter dated 21 August 1902.

12. Ibid. p. 488; letter dated 28 July 1902.

Swami Vivekananda's Reactions

Let us paint a pen picture of Swami Vivekananda at that point in time. In 1898 Swamiji had specially brought Sister Nivedita to India to work for the upliftment of the Indian women. Prior to her beginning the work, Swamiji took her and some other Western disciples to Kashmir. Knowing her intensely emotional nature, he attempted to direct her energies to the love of India and Her people. He gave her extensive training and instruction, and many scoldings too in his attempt to redirect all her energies towards her new work. Eloquent he poured out his heart, describing all that was good and noble in ancient India and how now, through the awakening of the Divine Mother, another Golden Age is at hand. On that trip he had asked Sister Nivedita to accompany him to the cave at Amarnath. There, through the grace of Lord Shiva, '...he had been granted the grace of Amarnath, The Lord of Immortality, not to die until he himself willed it.'¹⁶ He said later, 'Ever since I went to Amarnath, Shiva Himself has entered into my brain. He will not go.'¹⁷

Now we find Swamiji at a fully mature point in his life. For years prior to this he had pondered deep within himself regarding how to lift mankind with the wonderful truths revealed by his Master Sri Ramakrishna. Now his vision was clear. He knew what was needed for India at that point in time. He knew what Her role would be for the upliftment of the world in the future. He also knew what was needed in the West to awaken Her awareness of the purpose of life and Her role for the harmony of the world. His vision was of one world, working in

harmony through diverse methods towards the Supreme Goal.

Now, in 1902, the end was fast approaching. The Ramakrishna Math and Mission had started functioning on a sound foundation. The Eternal Truth had been spread broadcast in the West and in the East. He wrote in May 1902 to Miss MacLeod: 'I am going to retire for good. No more work for me.'¹⁸

Although in March he was too ill to make the journey to Japan, in June he appeared to be regaining his health. There was nothing sad or grave about the Swami during these days. A week prior to the end, he studied the Bengali almanac, perhaps selecting the exact day when he would leave the body. The brothers had been told by Sri Ramakrishna that, as soon as Swami Vivekananda knows who he is, he will not remain in the body. So we find this great

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soul, who had been born with a mission, now fully aware that his role was complete and it was time to leave the stage. In June a brother monk asked, 'Do you know yet who you are?' and he replied, 'Yes, I now know!' awing into silence everyone present.¹⁹ He refused to express any opinion on the questions of the day, saying, 'I can no more enter

16. *Vivekananda The Yogas and Other Works*, ed. Swami Nikhilananda, (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1953), p. 141.

17. *Ibid.* p. 148.

18. *Ibid.* p. 176.

19. *Ibid.*

into outside affairs,...I am already on the way.'²⁰

Politics or Education

Nivedita herself realized that Swami Vivekananda 'is the only person I know of who goes to the root of the matter, national man-making'²¹, but then, as she candidly acknowledges:

I am staggered at the vastness of it—then I recover and think perhaps the very weight of his requirements interferes with the short sharp view and the clear ringing word that India needs most at this moment. Perhaps my very ignorance and want of depth is my best weapon. Not that I do not think Swami's is the master word and for all time. I do think that—but I see with terrible distinctness that it is too big for any one generation. It needs a point.²²

Nivedita would like to give the vision of Swami Vivekananda a political pointedness. According to her, 'the other question', that is, the political question, must be settled first. We find Nivedita thought about the solution for India, but Swamiji not only thought but saw the solution. With his tears and profound depth of mind he went to the Divine to see and know the correct, precise solution for the sufferings of this age. His deep longing was always to clear the obstacles blocking man from radiating his true divine nature. One by one he took the problems of life of all humanity in the modern age and laid a platform of methods and means to rise above all darkness and attain deep peace and joy.

Swamiji was watching the movements of Sister Nivedita's mind and, on 24 June

1902, he exclaimed:

Well, Margot, I see. This is the period of your such and such a conviction! You have had your Brahmo conviction, and your Tagore conviction, and now you have these (Okakura) convictions. And they will pass, as others did!²³

On 29 June 1902, only five days before Swami Vivekananda's death, she tried hard to convince him of the need for a political solution first before the educational question. Knowing that Swamiji's first emphasis, as far as she was concerned, was always on her role in educating Indian women, Nivedita argued with Swamiji in the following vein: 'Don't you see?... the other question must be answered first, then all questions of education!' He only responded, 'Well, well Margot, perhaps you're right. Only I feel that I am drawing near to death—I cannot bend my mind to these worldly things now!²⁴

We know that Swami Vivekananda was aware of Okakura's activities in India, and he knew that Sister Nivedita's role was different. How did he know? Firstly, since Swamiji was born as a dynamic aspect of the Incarnation of the Age, he had the special prophetic vision which gave him a vastness of fore- and far-sight. He knew directly through the clarity of his mind that the sporadic efforts of the kind Okakura and his associates were engaged in were premature for India's freedom and destined to end in failure. Secondly, Swamiji was a master of the mind, his own as well as of others. Having met Okakura and travelled with him in March 1902, he could reach sound conclusions about Okakura's real purpose and true character. He knew Okakura had come from Japan ostensibly to invite him to a

20. Ibid.

21. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 436; letter dated 19 July 1901.

22. Ibid. p. 434.

23. Ibid. p. 526; letter dated 21 December 1902.

24. Ibid. p. 483; letter dated 24 July 1902.

religious conference in Japan and then engaged himself in the revolutionary politics of India. Thirdly, being a worker at foundations, he knew clearly the future role of India in this Age and her immediate need to reach that glorious height.

He knew that without preparing the country, without awakening the masses, no successful revolution could be staged. He went to the root of the matter and proposed

activities.²⁵

As for Nivedita, Swami Vivekananda was against her association with Okakura, first, because he was apprehensive that with her 'fiery' nature, aggravated by the instigation of Okakura, his spiritual daughter might go astray in her revolutionary path. He also felt that the revolutionary involvement of Nivedita, a member of the Ramakrishna Mission, was likely to compromise

While Swamiji did not believe in a foreign instigated revolution in India, he was not against revolutionary uprisings by the Indians themselves. He was, above everything else, a breaker of bondage. He cut off the mental bondage and gave the young revolutionaries that inspiration, that character, that fearlessness which enabled them to throw bombs and lay down their lives for the cause of the country's freedom.

a national man-making education capable of imparting strength and self-reliance, and uplifting women and the masses. The Mother is the centre of the home in the East as well as in the West. The upbringing of the child rests with her. If she is given a strong educational foundation, the whole nation will be culturally uplifted. If India could focus on these direct ideals, then the way would be open towards the country's spiritual, political, social and economic freedom.

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the monastery and endanger the Mission. He himself had expressly stated in the rules and regulations which he drafted that, 'The aims and ideals of the Mission being purely spiritual and humanitarian, it shall have no connection with politics.'

It was not that Nivedita wanted to desert her initial aim of working for the education of women of India, but that she wanted to extend her work and give it a political dimension. She puts her thought in this regard in the following terms:

Suppose even that I could add my impress to 10 or 12 girls—would it be so much gain? Is it not rather by taking the national consciousness of the women like that of men, and getting it towards problems and responsibilities, that one can help? Then, when they have surveyed the great scheme, have they not already become open to new views of life and necessity? Will they not achieve

25. Swami Vivekananda: *Mahabiplobi Hemchandra Ghosher Drishtite*, Swami Purnatmananda (Calcutta: Udbodhan, 1988), pp. 83-5.

these for themselves?²⁶

The only 'difference' between the approaches of Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita as she was in 1902 was that, while Swami Vivekananda wanted the total freedom of India and desired the national energy to be directed towards that end, Sister Nivedita put overwhelming emphasis on the political freedom of India. She, as she herself acknowledged in her letters, took 'a short sharp view'²⁷ of Swamiji's grand vision, giving it a point and seeking to awaken and direct the dormant powers of the people towards a political end.²⁸

Scholarly Involvement

The scholarly collaboration between Nivedita and Okakura resulted in the publication of Okakura's *Ideals of the East* by John Murray and Co. of London in 1903. The book created a sensation in the then India, with Nivedita enhancing the value of the book and its relevance to India by writing a forceful Introduction to it. An excerpt from this Introduction is quoted below to show the vein in which Nivedita sought to present the book:

Within the last ten years, by the genius of a wandering monk—Swami Vivekananda—orthodox Hinduism has again become aggressive as in the Asokan Period. For six or seven years past it has been sending missionaries into Europe and America.... It would almost seem as if it were the destiny of Imperial peoples to be conquered in turn by the religious ideas of their subjects. 'As the creed of the downtrodden Jew has held half the earth during eighteen centuries', so to quote the great Indian thinker just mentioned, 'It seems not unlikely that

that of the despised Hindu may yet dominate the world.' In some such event is the hope of Northern Asia. The process that took a thousand years at the beginning of our era may now, with the aid of steam and electricity, repeat itself in a few decades and the world may again witness the Indianising of the East. The author (of the *Ideals of the East*) has talked in vain if he has not conclusively proved that Asia, the Great Mother, is forever One.²⁹

The main ideas of the book being:- (a) that Asia is one, (b) that Asia is for the Asiatics, and (c) that Asia must rid itself of all domination of Europe—were so much to the liking of Nivedita that she worked for the book with earnestness and promoted it by all means. Nivedita was totally involved in the book, taking it as seriously as if it were

Once Nivedita became convinced of Swami Vivekananda's foresight with regard to the futility of her political involvement with Okakura, she could write in a positive affirmation of her total identification with her master: 'Everything seems a failure—save that great Life and its completeness of Victory'

her very own. She counted the service rendered in the writing of the book as the service rendered to the cause of India, and so writing the Introduction to the book as to justify the genius that was her Master, Swami Vivekananda.

After Swami Vivekananda died, doubts began to haunt Nivedita whether she was 'on the right path or not'³⁰ in the political relations that she had with Okakura. To

26. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 482.

27. *Ibid.* p. 484.

28. *Ibid.* p. 457.

29. *Nivedita Lokmata*, Sankari Prasad Basu (Calcutta: Ananda Publishers, 1987), vol. 2, p. 120.

30. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 481; letter dated 16 July 1902.

quote from her letter of 16 July 1902:

I think—do not you?—that one of the marks which distinguish great discipleship from poor, must probably be always the power of interpreting the Impersonal rather than the personal side even of the Masters.... It is all so different from what it was meant to be—and Swami was so angry two months ago, and the men are so sure I ought to do what He told me—and yet I cannot do differently from this. I have become the idea—and could die more easily than submit!³¹

Yet within less than a month and a half of the departure of Okakura from the scene (he left for Japan in October 1902), Nivedita showed signs of getting over the spell of Okakura when she wrote:

My share of India is so vast. I do not believe that I am to be crowded into a few months at all, as the spell of dear Nigu awhile ago almost made me fancy.³²

Expressing her disillusionment about the whole 'Ballygunge' group which Okakura had fostered during his stay in India, Nivedita writes:

I am disillusioned about the whole

31. Ibid. p. 481.

32. Ibid. p. 519; letter dated 19 November 1902.

Ballygunge connection.... I find not one soul amongst them to risk his own valuable neck. And the more this talkee-talkee proceeds at a scream, the more quiet do I find myself becoming.³³

Once Nivedita became convinced of Swami Vivekananda's foresight with regard to the futility of her political involvement with Okakura, she could write in a positive affirmation of her total identification with her master:

Everything seems a failure—save that great Life and its completeness of Victory.³⁴

Thus we find that the blessings of the guru ever sustain the disciple, as is said in Swamiji's *Raja Yoga*:

Nature's task is done, this unselfish task which our sweet nurse, nature, has imposed upon herself. She gently took the self-forgetting soul by the hand, as it were, and showed him all the experiences in the universe, all manifestations, bringing him higher and higher through various bodies, till his lost glory came back, and he remembered his own nature.³⁵

33. Ibid. . 525; letter dated 21 December 1902.

34. Ibid. p. 520; letter dated 19 November 1902.

35. *Vivekananda The Yogas and Other Works*, p. 687.

'He who knows the Bliss of Brahman, whence words together with the mind turn away, unable to reach It—he is not afraid of anything whatsoever.' He does not distress himself with the thought: Why did I not do what is good? Why did I do what is evil?...

—*Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, II.ix.1

Vedanta as the Gospel of Strength

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

One quality we all need every moment of our life is strength. That is an essential ingredient to keep us secure, free from dependence and anxiety, and happy. But there are three personal strengths—physical, intellectual, and moral or spiritual. So, which strength shall we choose? We, indeed, need all the three. Though in our immaturity we may say that physical strength is primary and enough for practical purposes, life teaches us that true and lasting happiness comes only from the moral or, deeper still to its root, the spiritual strength. And the clear teachings about this strength and the way to cultivate it are what Vedanta, the Upanishads, principally impart. As Swami Vivekananda said on several occasions, the Upanishads are a mine of strength, and he repeatedly exhorted us to develop first this strength. For, with this basic strength, even our present other two strengths get fully invigorated.

Revered President of our Order, Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, has explained below these ideas in his characteristically lucid style. This is an unpublished transcript of a talk he delivered in 1982 at our Delhi centre.

The term 'Vedanta' has various meanings. Its literal meaning is that it is 'the end of the Vedas' (*Veda-anta*). It is in Vedanta that we find the quintessence of the Vedas. The Vedas are the store-house of the knowledge of the eternal truth. Swami Vivekananda said, 'All that is called knowledge is in the Vedas.'¹ This supreme knowledge has been described in the Vedas in various ways to suit different levels of spiritual consciousness of aspirants.

By Vedas, therefore, we mean either that eternal knowledge or the Scripture which is supposed to be impersonal. It is neither the composition of any person in particular nor is it supposed to be written at any particular time. It is said to be eternal. But still, when we find it in book form, there is a beginning to it. The beginning of the Vedas is replete with *yajñas* (sacrifices) and various kinds of rituals. These are necessary

for people to get acquainted with the scripture. These rituals will gradually chasten their mind and make them fit to perceive higher truths.

So, in the beginning of the Vedas you will find mention of some sacrifices which do not appear to be ethically uplifting. That is why people get confused as to what the actual import of the Vedas is. How do these things find place in a book which is supposed to impart the highest teaching about the eternal Truth is what puzzles many. The idea is that man has to start from where he is and proceed step by step towards the goal. If you give only the highest ideal from the very beginning, an ordinary person may not find it useful for him. One has to start from where he stands. Accordingly the Vedas also teach beginners, who are full of desires, how their worldly desires can be fulfilled by supernatural methods.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 2, p. 169. [Hereafter CW.]

As human beings, we always strive to gain objectives that are pleasing to us. We wish to know the methods by which to ac-

quire them through our body and mind. There are ways of getting those objects of desire through processes which require that we have some control over our senses and lead a regulated life. These are taught by the Vedas, and thus they are useful to such persons. For the fulfilment of their desires, people follow the prescriptions of the Vedas and perform sacrifices. Their desires are fulfilled and, at the same time, they also get their minds chastened step by step. That is how worldly people are brought up from their animal-like life to the life of the Spirit, so that the lift may not be too much for them at the very outset. That is the reason why the Vedas teach various sacrifices. Then there are various hymns to deities. The deities too are innumerable.

Man starts his spiritual life in this manner: from the lowest rung of the ladder he gradually gets higher and higher till, last of all, the process culminates in the realization of the highest Reality which is termed Brah-

that is the Truth. It is absolutely beyond ordinary people, and is extremely abstruse for comprehension by ordinary minds which are not chastened through discipline. The Vedas say that the ultimate Truth can never be realized through the mind or the senses. They say, '*Yan-manasā na manute*, That which cannot be comprehended by the mind'.² The supreme state remains always beyond our human grasp. It is therefore that the Vedas first teach us the disciplines which are to be gone through, and later on the highest Truth is placed before us.

Now, what do we mean by strength? Ordinarily, for those who are extremely attached to the body, strength lies in the muscles. By strength, such people mean only muscular strength. But, as one rises higher in the scale of evolution, he or she feels that muscular strength is only of an inferior kind. There is a superior kind of strength, attainable through the mind—the intellectual strength. Finally, there is the strength de-

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man or the Absolute, which is free from all attributes. This goal is not to be attained by a mind that is not totally free from likes and dislikes, or, is not free from desires. The end of the Vedas is therefore its *anta*—the supreme teaching. The Upanishads are the Vedānta, and these contain the last word in spiritual life.

The ultimate Reality is '*Ekam Advitīyam*, One without a Second'. That which is beyond our thought, word and deed, that which our mind cannot comprehend ordinarily, where our senses can never reach,

rived through the knowledge of the Self. That is what the Upanishads teach us.

The Upanishads, however, do not teach us only about the strength that we can attain through the realization of the Self, but they also describe the steps which will gradually take us to that realization. Unless these lower steps are mentioned, the ideal of the highest truth will not be of much use, because it will always remain beyond our comprehension. That is why the Vedas teach us

2. *Kena-Upaniṣad*, 1:5.

all the details by means of which we can gradually rise to that level where Truth may be comprehended.

Imagine a newborn. How does it feel? It feels that it is absolutely helpless and has to depend upon others for everything, even for its very existence. That is because the child is extremely limited physically and its horizon too is very limited.

The Upanishad says: *Vālāgra-śata-bhāgasya, śatadhā kalpitasya ca, bhāgo jīvaḥ sa*

our existence would be miserable and there would be no hope for us. Again, if we did not have the idea of that Limitless, we would never strive to transcend the limitations. We have at the back of our mind somewhere the idea that we still are not what we can surely be. So we strive to go beyond our present limitations and here comes the teachings of the Upanishads.

They say that we can get over these deficiencies since they are not our real nature. We are in reality gifted with a sense of

One thing has to be clearly understood: we have got an insatiable desire to transcend our limitations. Whatever be the nature of our limitations, however painful they may be, we have a desire to go beyond. Without that desire, our existence would be miserable and there would be no hope for us.

vijñeyah...: Take the tip of a hair. It is very slender. Divide it into a hundred parts. Take one part, and divide it again into a hundred. An individual is only a fraction of that! That is the statement about our finiteness. But then, the next portion says: *Sa ca-anantyāya kalpate*: That microscopic entity can become infinite. After stating our present state of smallness, we are told that, if we strive methodically, we can reach a condition in which we shall become unlimited. This is not merely a statement. An elaborate methodology has been given for its attainment.

The method is self-enquiry. It may be enquiry about our own Self or of the world around us. A little child does not know anything either about itself or about the world it lives in. It has to learn everything. Similarly, we have to begin with our limitations, gradually increasing our knowledge of ourselves and the world around us. One thing has to be clearly understood: we have got an insatiable desire to transcend our limitations. Whatever be the nature of our limitations, however painful they may be, we have a desire to go beyond. Without that desire,

eternal knowledge, eternal existence and eternal bliss. It is because of this gift to us since the very beginning that we aspire to have them. Without this inner gift there would be no desire to transcend our present limitations. Swami Vivekananda says: 'Man is infinite; and this limitation in which he exists now is not his nature.'³ He also says: 'In reality you are neither going nor coming, you are not being born, nor going to be reborn; you are infinite, ever-present, beyond all causation, and ever-free.'⁴ Swamiji never tired of repeating such teachings. He used to quote from the passage: *Śṛṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrāḥ*: Hear, ye all of this world, children of immortal bliss!⁵ We are the children of immortality and that is our birthright. We have only forgotten that.

I give an illustration: A prince, who is born heir to his father's throne is in a well-protected palace, sleeping in the mother's arms. He dreams that he is in a forest and

3. CW, vol. 6, p. 22.

4. CW, vol. 2, p. 235.

5. *Śvetāsvatara-Upanisad*, 4:2:5.

sees a tiger. Becoming afraid, he starts crying, though neither the tiger nor the forest he sees really exist. There is no real cause for any fear. But the nightmare makes him cry. What does the mother do? She wakes him up. And then, when the dream breaks, he realizes that he is perfectly protected, and so he smiles.

That is exactly our condition. We are well protected, free from all blemishes and impurities. We have infinite strength and infinite knowledge in us. Yet we are forgetful of that because of this bad dream of a world, and therefore feel miserable and weep. We weep because we do not know that these limitations are not really our inherent nature. It is then that the Veda calls: *Uttiṣṭhata, jāgrata*: Arise, Awake! The actual

have to dehypnotize ourselves. We have to meditate upon such passages of the Vedas as teach us about the different kinds of reality we actually have. In the Upanishads, we find that when we reach the ultimate Reality we really become independent—*Svarājo bhavati*: One becomes a ruler of himself. We are, in fact, controlled by our senses, our environment, by the opinions of people around us. That is how we have been hypnotized into feeling that we are little puny creatures. Hence we have to dehypnotize ourselves.

Swami Vivekananda tells the story of a little lion cub which got into a herd of sheep and began to think of himself as a sheep. Once, a lion came, caught hold of that sheep-like lion, took him to a patch of water and

We shall not be able to attain to the realization of our real nature by mere repetition of words. We have to first of all clear our minds of cobwebs. The feeling that we are little creatures, helpless and under the mercy of all external forces, has to be got rid of. That is why we have to constantly think, discuss, cogitate and understand the truth that we are not really bound souls. One more thing. To be able to rise to that mental level we must have pure conduct.

passage of the Veda is, *Uttiṣṭhata, jāgrata, prāpya varān nibodhata*: Arise, awake, and, having come across a man of wisdom, understand and receive the knowledge.⁶ Swamiji modifies it thus: 'Arise, Awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.' Swamiji says: 'We are responsible for what we are; and whatever we wish ourselves to be, we have the power to make ourselves.'⁷ We have to break the spell of the bad dream. The Upanishads are very useful for that, because they are the store-house of that knowledge of strength.

We cannot, however, reach that goal merely by studying the Upanishads. We

said, 'Look into the water. You are similar to myself. You are not a lamb; you are a lion.' The lion also gave him a piece of meat to eat and said, 'Taste this.' He then roared, and the little 'lamb' also roared like the lion he really was.

The situation we are in is similar to this. We have to dehypnotize ourselves step by step. The Upanishads themselves make it clear to us that, merely repeating their teachings will not make us achieve anything. We shall not be able to attain to the realization of our real nature by mere repetition of words. We have to first of all clear our minds of cobwebs. The feeling that we are little creatures, helpless and under the mercy of all external forces, has to be got rid of. That is why we have to constantly think, discuss,

6. *Kātha-Upaniṣad*, 1:3:14.

7. *CW*, vol. 1, p. 31.

cogitate and understand the truth that we are not really bound souls.

One more thing. To be able to rise to that mental level we must have pure conduct. The Upanishad⁸ says:

नाविरतो दुश्चरितान्नशान्तो नासमाहितः।
नाशान्तमानसो वाऽपि प्रज्ञानेनैवमाप्नुयात्॥

*Nāvirato duścāritāt-
nāśānto nāsamāhitaḥ;
Nāśāntamānaso vā'pi
prajñānenainamāpnuyāt.*

One who has not desisted from bad conduct, whose senses are not under control, whose mind is not concentrated, whose mind is not free from anxiety (about the result of concentration), cannot attain this Self through knowledge.

The purport of one's real nature cannot be attained by mere thinking, mere argumentation and so on, since these are done with an impure mind. We cannot transcend our limitations with such a mind. So, the steps to reach our goal are mentioned. First, our conduct has to be made pure, our senses will have to be quiet, and we should have control over our senses. Our minds have to be stopped. Then alone can we realize the highest Truth.

These are therefore the procedures one has to adopt. It is, however, a long process. One cannot achieve the goal immediately. The chastening of the mind has to be made step by step. One should not be afraid of the ways the mind is behaving now. A human being should not be a slave of the mind. He should be its master. Our mind is bound to come under control. But then, it has to be properly tackled. We must realize the inner strength—that is what the Upanishad

teaches us. The Upanishads never teach anyone to be weak. If you go on weeping, nobody will help you. As Swamiji says, all the gods and goddesses will not be able to help you unless you help yourself. You will have to work out your own salvation; none can help you. That means, you will have to be convinced about the inherent strength and that you have to reach that ideal. Without firm faith, you cannot proceed further.

The Upanishads say that your body, mind, etc. are all mere appendices, mere super-impositions, on the Self. Since you are the observer, since you are the witness of the processes of the body and the mind, you are not a slave to that. You are the master and they are to be under your control. One can realize one's own nature only then. That is what is important. Unless we know ourselves, we can never be free.

Mere book-knowledge is not of any help to us, as the Upanishad itself says. Narada went to Sanatkumara and told him, 'Sir, I am miserable, I am so much afflicted with grief that I cannot bear it. Help me, please.' Sanatkumara asked him, 'Tell me, first of all, what you know.' Narada said in reply, that he had studied the Vedas, the Vedāṅga, and so on and so forth, giving a long list of almost all the subjects known at that period of time. But then he added, 'I am only a man of words, I do not know the Atman (शब्दविदेवास्मि नाऽत्मवित्).'⁹ Now, only one who knows the Self goes beyond all grief. So Sanatkumara instructed Narada that he should realize his real Self. Knowledge of the Self is what is important, but we are busy with only accumulating these endless bits of secular knowledge. If we go on and on with that, then we shall reach nowhere. What is necessary is to realize the Self.

8. *Kāṭha-Upaniṣad*, 1:2:24.

9. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*, 7:1:3.

What is this Self? That has been beautifully described in the Upanishads. This description helps us fix the method to get at the real nature of the Self. Though by means of ordinary mind we cannot understand deeply about the Self, with a pure mind, however, we can at least begin to sense that it is the Self that thinks through the mind. It thinks through the mind, hears through the ears, sees through the eyes, and so forth. It is the power behind all our senses, and the power behind our mental and physical activities. That is what is the real nature of our true Self.

The true Self has to be attained through analysis. We analyse ourselves, gradually trying to see what is our real nature. A beautiful method is prescribed for that. There is nobody who does not know his own self. Everybody knows, even the dumbest person

stages and processes of the mind? Therefore I cannot be the mind. Thus I am something different from both body and mind.

What that something is, is perhaps difficult to understand. For the sake of convenience, we call it pure consciousness—pure in the sense that it is not associated with any object. We have no idea of what that pure consciousness may be. We can, however, make a mental analysis of these factors—the body etc.—and we can at least form a conception of what that may be which is free from all associations, all accretions. That is supposed to be the Self. Though it can be rationally established in this manner, we cannot explain the Self. For one thing, we do not have the experience of that consciousness which is called pure or absolute consciousness. We have to go on analysing and gradually dehypnotizing ourselves, thereby

Fear comes from our belief that we are little fractions in this world of multiplicity. The feeling that we are puny creatures, under the mercy of all the external forces, increases our fear. But once we know that we as Self are the only existence and everything else is a dream, then nothing can harm us. Think always you are the pure one, the sinless, you are the ever free, says Swamiji.

has some idea of his own self. But his idea is always confused. Let us use the simple method of analysis. I am using this body. I identify this as myself. In retrospect, I was born and then came through the stages of youth and middle age. The body became completely different as it passed through the different stages. But my sense of individuality did not change. So, that which remained unchanged must be different from all the other factors that changed, and that unchanging reality, which is always with me, must be myself, not the factors which are constantly changing. The same is true with regard to the mind also. The mind constantly changes from one idea to another. How do I know this change is going on, if I don't persist through all these changing

becoming able to understand that we are not identical with these changing factors. When we realize that we are not inseparably associated with or a part and parcel of all this, how can we suffer with the sufferings of the body and the mind? That is what the Upanishads teach.

If one realizes the Self in its true nature, why should he suffer when the body suffers? The body, the senses and the mind may go together, but the Self is different from them. Therefore one does not lose anything with the loss of the body or the mind or the senses.

All this may look simple, but it does not carry conviction now since our mind is not

freed from impurities, worldly desires, etc. That is why the mind has to be freed from impurities. This can be done by various methods: through devotion, through good actions, and through reasoning. Then alone can the mind conceive of Brahman. Brahman, however, has been categorically stated to be the eternal Subject and never a knowable object. Then, how can we *know* the Subject? We cannot *know* it through the mind nor through the senses. Then, how does one know the Self? *Vijñātāram are kena vijāniyāt*—But, my dear, through what shall the Knower be known?

We cannot get rid of our identification with the objects and realize the experiences as different from them. Still, once we realize that, nothing can really frighten or disturb us. A beautiful story is told. It is said that the First Being, Hiranyagarbha, the first individuated existence, found out when he appeared that he was alone. He got frightened. He burst out weeping. (This is a sort of kindergarten story.) Recovering a little, he then cogitated like this: 'If there is nothing other than myself, whom am I afraid of?' He realized his own Self, and from that moment his fear was gone.

Fear comes from our belief that we are little fractions in this world of multiplicity. The feeling that we are puny creatures, under the mercy of all the external forces, increases our fear. But once we know that we as Self are the only existence and everything else is a dream, then nothing can harm us. Think always you are the pure one, the sinless, you are the ever-free, says Swamiji. By such constant suggestion one can be free from hypnotism. It has to be remembered always that we have brought upon ourselves this state of affairs. So we can free ourselves by our own effort only. Because this eternal knowledge, eternal strength is our nature, our heritage. None can deprive us of this. We need not ever pray to gods and

goddesses for that. We have all the strength in us. Of course, the help of prayers can always be taken so long as they give us faith and make us stronger.

Here is a simile from an Upanishad: Two birds live on the same tree. One bird at the lower branch is eating fruits—sometimes sweet and sometimes bitter. It enjoys when it tastes a sweet fruit, and is unhappy when it tastes a bitter fruit. Then, in search of sweeter fruits, gradually it hops up and up and sees that at the top there is another bird—which is not eating anything and yet is full of joy. So, it goes nearer and nearer the upper bird and suddenly realizes that it is not different from the other bird, that it is really one with that bird, and that the so-called lower bird was but a mere shadow all the while, only a shadow cast by the upper one.

Similarly, we are that supreme Self which is free from all miseries. Only we have been thinking of ourselves to be different from That, and that is why we have brought misery upon ourselves. The Upanishads always teach us that we are eternally free, and we regain our freedom by constantly reminding ourselves that we are not bound, that bondage is only a misconception, a bad dream. Break the dream and we realize our true nature. The Upanishads help us break this dream.

Let us hope that the study of the Upanishads will be fruitful in our lives and give us that experience of our real nature which is beyond all duality, which is free from all miseries, which is eternal, imperishable and full of eternal Joy. □

Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle.

—Michael Angelo

Vivekananda and the Vedanta Movement

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

The revered and well-known author, one of the Vice Presidents of the Ramakrishna Order, gives below the gist of Vedanta, its influence on the world in the past and its irresistible relevance in the future. The following text is in fact an edited version of his Message to the International Vedanta Seminar and the inauguration of the German Vedanta-House at Bindweide in September last year.

The speciality of Vedanta is its scientific approach to the investigation of the true nature of the human being, like the modern Western scientific approach to the investigation of the true nature of the external world. Modern Western science, in its nuclear field, is now turning its attention to an investigation of the inner nature of the scientist as the observer, as the knower, of the observed and known universe. Some nuclear scientists such as J.H. Wheeler have even suggested the word 'participator' in place of the word 'observer', because observation of a nuclear phenomenon changes the nature of that phenomenon. A biologist like the late Sir Julian Huxley says that the study of the mind of the observer has only just begun in the West. But the ancient Upaniṣads of India penetrated into the deep dimension of the human personality and discovered the immortal and the infinite, behind the mortal and the finite self. Swami Vivekananda conveyed this great wisdom of ancient India to the people of the West through the Chicago World Parliament of Religions of 1893, by addressing all humanity as *amṛtasya putrāḥ*, the children of immortal bliss, according to the following verses of the *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad* (II.5 & III.8):

*Śṛṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrāḥ
ā ye dhāmāni divyāni tasthulī;
Vedāhametaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntam
ādityavarṇaṁ tamasaḥ parastāt*

*Tameva viditvā atimṛtyumeti
nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya.*

Listen to me, people all over the world, children of immortal bliss, and even the angels and gods, if there be, in the heavens; I have realized this infinite man behind the finite man, luminous like the sun and beyond all darkness of ignorance and delusion. Knowing this truth alone, one can go beyond death and delusion, there is no other way to reach our evolutionary goal.

Most people of Germany, as well as the rest of Europe, have now lost interest in the traditional religions, creating a spiritual vacuum. Such a spiritual vacuum is extremely harmful to human happiness and welfare, if continued long. But the vacuum can be filled only by a spirituality and philosophy that are products of a scientific approach. This is the approach of Vedanta. Vedanta accepts modern physical science, but does not consider physical science as constituting all of science. From physical science the human mind must rise to the first spiritual level of experience, namely, the science of values, and thence to the highest science of *adhyātma vidyā*, science of spirituality.

Posing the question, how the West, which has undoubtedly been in the forefront of advance in several fields of knowledge from the time of the Greeks, could lag behind India in this inner field of enquiry these

thousands of years, Professor Max Müller answers (*Three Lectures on the Vedanta Philosophy*, London, 1894, p. 7):

But if it seems strange to you that the old Indian philosophers should have known more about the soul than Greek, or medieval, or modern philosophers, let us remember that however much the telescopes for observing the stars of heaven have been improved, the observatories of the soul have remained much the same.

In the same lecture Max Müller says on page 39 that the Sages of the Upaniṣads could pursue truth fearlessly and steadily because their thinkers were 'undisturbed by the thought of there being a public to please or critics to appease'.

The contribution of the Upaniṣads to Indian culture and life has been profound. To quote from my book *The Message of the Upaniṣads*, page 19:

To the Upaniṣads India owes almost all the brighter sides of her life and culture. To them she owes her impressive record of active toleration within her borders and the uniformly peaceful and benevolent nature of her foreign relations in the field of religion. To them she owes the singular absence of aggressive political and military policies and programmes on her part towards other nations, during her millennia of history. To them she owes the periodical renewal of her national springs of life when they seemed all but choked and about to dry up.

To them also she owes the absence of the heavy hand of an all-powerful church and the tentacles of an inescapable dogma on the national life and mind, allowing for the emergence and unhampered functioning, in succeeding peri-

ods, of free, creative, and universal spirits who came to purify and reactivate the dormant spirit of the people, who were received by the Indian people and given divine honours, unlike the hostility and persecution with which spiritual innovators were, and still are, received in all Semitic religions in the absence of the blessings of the impersonal background which the Upaniṣads had provided for the Indian religions, and whose procession down the ages is an impressive feature of India's long history.

In the preface to his book, *The World as Will and Idea* (vol. 1, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1957, pp. xii-xiii), Schopenhauer, writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, has referred to the impact which the Vedanta will in due course have on the West. After stating that the West's acquaintance with the Vedas, 'the access to which, opened to us through the Upaniṣads, is in my eyes the greatest advantage which this still young century enjoys over previous ones,' he predicted:

I believe that the influence of the Sanskrit literature will penetrate not less deeply than did the revival of Greek literature in the fifteenth century.

It is generally understood that the modern West has been influenced only by Greece, Rome and Palestine. But the late Professor Will Durant of America, author of the famous ten-volume *Story of Civilization*, the first volume of which is entitled *Our Oriental Heritage*, had written another book entitled, *The Case for India*, advocating the grant of political freedom to India by the British, after witnessing Mahatma Gandhi's political struggles of non-violent *satyāgraha* for India's freedom. But that book was proscribed by the British Government. In its chapter one, with the title, 'A Perspective of India', Will Durant writes (New York, Si-

mon Schuster, 1930):

Let us remember, first, that India is not a little island, nor a continent sparsely inhabited by savages, but a vast territory containing 320,000,000 souls—three times as many as in the United States, more than in North and South America combined, more than in all Europe, west of Russia, combined; all in all, one-fourth of the world's population. Let us remember, further, that in the northern and more important half of India the people are predominantly of the same race as the Greeks, the Romans and ourselves—i.e., 'Indo-Europeans' or 'Aryans'; that though their skin has been browned by the tireless sun, their features resemble ours, and are in general more regular and refined than those of the average European; that India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages; that she was the mother of our philosophy, mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics, mother, through Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity, mother, through the village community, of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all.

Vedanta is scientific, because it is the product of an inquiry into truth by a group of brilliant minds, because it welcomes questioning of its conclusion, and because its stress is on experience and not on unquestioned belief. To express this characteristic of Vedanta, in the words of Professor Max Müller (*Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 182):

It is surely astounding that such a system as the Vedanta should have been slowly elaborated by the indefatigable and intrepid thinkers of India thousands of years ago, a system that even now

makes us feel giddy, as in mounting the last steps of the swaying spire of a Gothic cathedral. None of our philosophers, not excepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant, or Hegel has ventured to erect such a spire, never frightened by storms or lightnings. Stone follows on stone after regular succession after once the first steps have been made, after once it has been clearly seen that in the beginning there can have been but one, as there will be but one in the end, whether we call it Atman or Brahman.

Even in India, Vedanta is beginning to directly influence our people only since Swami Vivekananda's time. In Europe also it has begun to attract people's attention about the same time. We can be certain that its influence will do immense good to Europe as well as to India. The *Kārikā* of Gauḍapāda on the *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad* refers to Vedanta as *sarva sattva sukho hitaḥ*—'for the happiness and welfare of all human beings'.

Swami Vivekananda has expressed the truths taught by Vedanta in a brief utterance (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 1, p. 194):

Each Soul is potentially divine.

The goal (of human evolution) is to manifest this divine within by controlling nature, external (by science, technology, and socio-political processes) and internal (by the science of values and spiritual practices).

Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free.

This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details. □

Empowering Mother and Child: Ramakrishna Vedanta Now

DR. M. SIVARAMKRISHNA

In the context of current researches in the fields of cognition and consciousness, the author shows how Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences, especially his 'discovery' of himself as a child of the Divine Mother, have a profound bearing on the growing awareness of the greatness of the Mother Goddess, the consequent empowering of women through spirituality, the understanding of male-female 'desire', the observation of some psychologists that there is an archetypal child hidden in everyone's consciousness, etc.

Prof. Sivaramkrishna, who is the Head of the Department of English, Osmania University, Hyderabad, is also Chairman of the Institute of Personal Development, New Delhi.

The Emerging Goddess

'In our own time, in our own culture,' says Elinor W. Gadon, 'the Goddess once again is becoming a symbol of empowerment for women.' Describing the comprehensive range of this empowerment, she adds that the Goddess is

a catalyst for an emerging spirituality that is earth-centred; a metaphor for the earth as a living organism; an archetype for feminine consciousness; a mentor for healers; the emblem of a new political movement; an aspiration for artists; and a model for resacralizing woman's body and the mystery of human sexuality.¹

The Discourse of 'Desire'

Gadon's observations suggest a re-thinking of the whole question of 'desire' in religious/theological discourses. Traditionally, woman is, by and large, posited as an antithesis to God; or, rather as a distraction that draws the male away from inner quest. The role of man in the spiritual life of a

woman is analogous but not emphasized so effectively. Gender bias is one of the stumbling blocks to right perception of the status of women. In short, 'maleness, viewed through the Incarnation, is religiously legitimated as the normative human condition.'² The situation is thus theologically fraught with strange male textual/sexual politics which engendered patriarchal reading of all texts, including the scriptural. This 'cognitive dissonance' spells disaster to religious hypotheses in contemporary discourses.

Ramakrishna Vedanta:

Contemporization of Implicit Correctives

Ramakrishna's incredible range of *sadhana* (spiritual practice), with the Mother as invariably the nucleus of constant reference, offers a practical way out of the impasse created by male-dominated readings of spiritual quest and its modes (as also scriptural texts).

There is, here, a highly pragmatic resolution to the paradoxes implicit in the dis-

1. Elinor W. Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1990), p. xv.

2. Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine's Writing on Women* (London: Darton Longman and Todd Ltd., 1995), p. 4.

course of desire. For, Ramakrishna constantly cautions *sadhakas* against the snares of 'woman and gold' and yet the entire rationale of his Incarnate divinity is rooted in perceiving woman as *shakti*, neutral in its operative energies of both redemption and degeneration. In short, Ramakrishna does not shortcircuit desire (for woman) through suppression, but distances and defines it as 'desire' for union with the Divine. Taking an extremely suggestive sociological image he says:

Women are so many images of Shakti. In the western parts of this country the bridegroom holds a knife in his hand during marriage, and in Bengal, a nut-cracker. The idea is that he will cut the bonds of Maya with help of the bride who is Shakti Herself. This is Virabhava, 'the way of the hero'. But I never practised it. Mine is the attitude of the 'child'.³

Ramakrishna, thus *does not negate* the attitudes of passion implicit in one's response to 'woman'. Used in the mystical contexts, properly, this passion is not destructive but a redeeming *shakti*, the sword with which one cuts the knots of ignorance asunder.

aspect of mysticism—the role of subversion by women of a largely male preserve—which is being increasingly made visible in contemporary studies of scriptures. Indeed, as Luce Irigaray, the 'feminist' thinker notes, mystical discourse is 'the only place in Western history where woman speaks and acts in such a public way' and therefore mysticism formed one area 'where women could and did excel more frequently than men.'⁴ In Ramakrishna Vedanta, we have an affirmation of this not only in the life of the Holy Mother but also in the autonomous institutionalizing of 'women's' spirituality in the Sarada Math.

To be sure, Ramakrishna identifies woman as Shakti but, one can argue, he is himself *not* a woman. Therefore, he is talking as a man about women but not as a woman about her own kind. Perhaps, Ramakrishna forestalled this: he considered himself as a child. Hence the dissolution of gender categories in his expansive asexual consciousness.

Sadhana: Reclaiming The Inner Child

'There is,' says Erik Erikson, 'a universal blindspot in the makers and interpreters

To be sure, Ramakrishna identifies woman as Shakti but, one can argue, he is himself not a woman. Therefore, he is talking as a man about women but not as a woman about her own kind. Perhaps, Ramakrishna forestalled this: he considered himself as a child. Hence the dissolution of gender categories in his expansive asexual consciousness.

Shakti is both *vidya maya* and *avidya maya*, the redemptive and the enslaving.

Ramakrishna thus contemporizes in a uniquely effective way the sacralization of erotic energies implicit in most religions but explicitly made practical in Hindu systems of *sadhana*, notably the Tantra. This is an

of history: they ignore the fateful function of childhood in the fabric of society. Historians and philosophers recognize "a female principle" in the world but not the fact that man is born and reared by women.'⁵

3. *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1993), p. 126.

4. Quoted in Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 136.

5. Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (London: Paladin/Grafton Books, 1977), p. 363.

Kali's child, Ramakrishna, would certainly endorse these views, presumably. But, this child, a product certainly, of recent history, goes beyond to encompass several aspects which crystallize and animate the powerful archetype of the inner child. This is an archetype surfacing in the consciousness of humanity today, not in a spectacular but certainly a visible way. Recent speculations reinforce what Jung noted earlier: 'our differentiated consciousness is in continual danger of being uprooted: hence it needs compensation through the still existing state of childhood.' For, 'the child motif represents not only something that existed in the distant past but also something that exists now.'⁶

'Archetype', it seems to me, is not a very adequate term to identify or encompass the enormous range of Ramakrishna vis-a-vis the child (or Ramakrishna, the

Even at the height of his sadhana when the allegedly 'strange' ways of his behaviour did not have any societal validating, Ramakrishna *never felt frustrated or neurotic*. In other words, the child (in) Ramakrishna, though a part of and not apart from society, never required its sanction in areas where it has no warrant to comment or define behaviour. In an adult world, given to fragmented psyche, Ramakrishna is obviously *not* a child but one suffering from 'madness'. But then, this is a reading which needed corrective, and the corrective is eloquently evident in the fact that Ramakrishna continued to be a child untouched by the adult world (though exposed and wrestling with its conflicts and anomalies). In short, Ramakrishna's is not the case of a retarded or a neurotic child licking the wounds of frustrated emotions (presumably sexual, for Freudians) but a child delighting in the unitive consciousness free from fragmentation.

Cognitive research today is pointing to new—that is, hitherto undiscovered—areas of consciousness earlier brushed aside as, at best, intuitive and, at worst, abnormal, insane. The areas of cognitive study identified by Howard Gardner as consisting of 'visual perception, imaging, categorization and human rationality', are areas in which the experiences of Ramakrishna have vital clues (and lived clues, let us add) for resolving many apparent paradoxes.

child). For instance, this divine child of the Divine Mother is *not* an alienated pathological specimen of regression. Hence, recycling the resulting neurosis through 'mother' fixation. If, as Erikson argues, 'ultimately, children become neurotic not from frustrations but from the lack or loss of societal meaning in these frustrations'⁷, then Ramakrishna's case forces a new look at this assumption.

This fragmentation is rooted in all its complexity in the basic binaries of woman and man. The child with 'prelapsarian innocence' (to use theology) is exempt from these binaries. As Ralph Metzner notes, the child is 'androgynous because he/she represents the perfect union of opposites. Only the old self, the ordinary ego, identifies itself as male or female—and this self has now died.'⁸

6. C.G. Jung, 'The Psychology of the Child Archetype', *Reclaiming the Inner Child*, ed. Jeremiah Abrams (London: Harper Collins, 1995), pp. 34–5.

7. Erikson, p. 224.

The androgynous is effortlessly, triumphantly vindicated not only in the Great Master's behaviour but also in that glorious

8. Jeremiah Abrams, op. cit.

vision of Shiva/Shakti fused inseparably, granted, significantly, to Mathur Nath Biswas whose worldliness continued alongside his devotion to the Master. 'I saw you,' he told the Master himself, 'distinctly as my Mother installed and worshipped in the temple, and immediately you turned about in the opposite direction, I saw you as Mahadeva Himself. *I thought at first that it was an optical illusion. I rubbed my eyes well and looked, but saw the same thing. This happened as often as I looked.*'⁹

The varied aspects seen, so far,—the emerging goddess, the discourse of desire, its implicit correctives, sadhana as reclaiming the inner child, society and the behaviour of the child—all these point to the vast range of significances this child of Dakshineswar Bhavatarini has for the contemporary attempts to draw (or redraw) a comprehensive map of consciousness.

Ramakrishna Vedanta:

Map of Inclusive Consciousness

Cognitive research today is pointing to new—that is, hitherto undiscovered—areas of consciousness earlier brushed aside as, at best, intuitive and, at worst, abnormal, in-

sane. The areas of cognitive study identified by Howard Gardner as consisting of 'visual perception, imaging, categorization and human rationality',¹⁰ are areas in which the experiences of Ramakrishna have vital clues (and *lived clues*, let us add) for resolving many apparent paradoxes. Notably, the visions, the language, and *the limits to rationality* exemplified in Ramakrishna (and the Vedanta as expounded by Swamiji) demand and sustain the most trenchant empirical analysis. And basic to Ramakrishna's map is the Divine Mother and the Divine Child. From this follows the rest of the areas of consciousness. After all, as the famed mathematician Ralph H. Abraham declared after a stay in the Himalayas, 'my Himalayan cave illuminations could be abstracted and applied to society, to the history of consciousness (and unconsciousness), and therefore to the future.'¹¹ If this is true, then Ramakrishna Vedanta has the relevant idiom to consciousness studies.

One may object that Ramakrishna's language is religious/theological. But are we not increasingly becoming aware that it is impossible to have an immaculate 'unalloyed religious language' today? □

9. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, tr. Swami Jagadananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994), vol. 1, p. 497.

10. Howard Gardner, *The Mind's New Science: A History of the Cognitive Revolution* (Basic Books, Harper Collins, 1987), p. 399.

11. Ralph H. Abraham, *Chaos Gaia Eros* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), p. 2.

One cannot have that pure love and knowledge without the grace of the Lord, and He graciously gives that devotion and knowledge. If one is sincerely resigned to the Lord, He certainly becomes gracious. You may wander all over the world, you may visit all the holy places, but without His grace nothing can be accomplished. That is why I say to the boys at the monastery when they insist on going here and there: 'My children, where would you roam? Be resigned and stay at the threshold of the Master's mansion. Nothing else will be necessary. What is needed is sincere resignation.'

—Swami Shivananda, *For Seekers of God*, p. 105

Vivekananda and the Art of Living

DR. VISVANATH CHATTERJEE

People insufficiently acquainted with the life and ideas of Swami Vivekananda consider him only as a great monk, a religious leader, a guru. Yes, that is correct, says the author, and adds that Swamiji was 'also a great guru. The guru's function is to teach us, and the true guru does not merely teach us how to tread the spiritual path.... He teaches us how to live our everyday life in mundane and humdrum surroundings. In other words, he teaches us the art of living'—an art that depends not on money, power and comforts but on our ability to cultivate fearlessness, self-esteem, concentration and will.

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I

Swami Vivekananda is not only a great *sādhaka* (spiritual luminary) and a great thinker but also a great guru. The guru's function is to teach us and the true guru does not merely teach us how to tread the spiritual path. That path is difficult indeed—as difficult to traverse as the razor's edge, as the *Katha-Upanishad* reminds us. On that path the guru is the lantern to our feet. But he is something more as well. He teaches us how to live our everyday life in mundane and humdrum surroundings. In other words, he teaches us the art of living.

Merely to breathe, as other animals do, is not to live truly. We cannot be satisfied by only eating, sleeping and breeding. Nor can only creature comforts, sexual freedom and material wealth make us happy; otherwise there would not have been so many cases of suicide among the people of prosperous and liberal Scandinavian countries. The fact remains that we are more than glorified animals, and the earlier we realize that the better it is for us. To live only at the animal level—mere abdominal existence—goes against the essence of human nature. For man is made in God's own image and cannot live by bread alone. He is not merely the

body but also the mind and the spirit. He has to live a life which harmonizes all these three main elements of his—this is where he has to be an artist. This alone can make him genuinely happy.

Life has to be lived—life itself, and not some vain mockery, some painted veil which is called life. It is a thousand pities that most of us lose life itself while we are engaged in living. 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it' (*St. Matthew, 7:14*). Vivekananda is one of those few who found it and he wants all of us to find it also. The art of living is the finest of fine arts and who can be a better teacher for mankind in this than Vivekananda?

The supreme mantra of good living is *abhiḥ* (fearlessness). This is the mantra into which Vivekananda has initiated us. *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis was one of his favourite books and he translated a part of it into Bengali. Vivekananda must have been greatly influenced and inspired by these electrifying words of à Kempis: 'We must live boldly, work boldly, and die boldly. Fear is weakness, fear is sin.' This is the great secret of successful life and this is

the quintessence of the art of living, and the words are echoed and re-echoed time and again in the speeches and writings of Swamiji. 'Be of good courage', that was Vivekananda's message to mankind. And we should never think of ourselves as alone because we never are. As we are assured in the Bible: 'Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.' (*The Book of Joshua*, 1:9). To be a full-fledged human being is to have the red badge of courage for our daily wear. Jesus Christ and others have already worn it cheerfully and so have paved the path for us. Vivekananda is one of those who belong to this glorious company of pioneers.

There is, in the Western religious tradition, an emphasis on man's sinful nature,

Life has to be lived—life itself, and not some vain mockery, some painted veil which is called life. It is a thousand pities that most of us lose life itself while we are engaged in living.

including the concept of original sin. This is something that Vivekananda does not like at all. He thinks that this only intimidates man and makes him more fearful. Nothing can be more injurious to him morally and physically. In fact, Vivekananda often asserts that fear is the deadliest of sins. In a letter to Alasinga Perumal, he wrote on 28 May 1894:

'Wake up, stop not until the goal is reached', say the Vedas. Up, up, the long night is passing, the day is approaching, the wave has risen, nothing will be able to resist its tidal fury. The spirit, my boys, the spirit; the love, my children, the love; the faith, the belief; and fear not! The greatest sin is fear.¹

'Fear not'—that is the ever-recurring refrain. Vivekananda is forever harping on the same theme of fearlessness. He wrote to Mary Hale in a letter from New York dated 1 February 1895: 'The mind is still weak, Sister, it sometimes mechanically clutches at earthly help. But I am not afraid. Fear is the greatest sin my religion teaches.'²

II

In his reply to the address of welcome at Paramagudi, Vivekananda points out that fearlessness is the mightiest message of the Upanishads and that fear is at the root of degeneration and sin: 'What makes a man stand up and work? Strength. Strength is goodness, weakness is sin. If there is one word that you find coming out like a bomb from the Upanishads, bursting like a bomb-shell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word fearlessness.'³

Fearlessness is reiterated in the Vedas and Vivekananda refers to this in 'Karma Yoga':

One idea comes out of all this—the condemnation of all weakness. This is a particular idea in all our teachings which I like, either in philosophy, or in religion, or in work. If you read the Vedas, you will find this word always repeated—fearlessness—fear nothing. Fear is a sign of weakness. A man must go about his duties without taking notice of the sneers and the ridicule of the world.⁴

A point that Vivekananda makes here and in the earlier passages quoted—that fear

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1992), vol. 5, p. 35. [Hereafter CW.]

2. CW, vol. 5, p. 71.

3. CW, vol. 3, p. 160.

4. CW, vol. 1, p. 47.

is a sign of weakness—he also makes elsewhere. Like Satan in *Paradise Lost* (whose well-known words, 'Arise, arise, or be for ever fall'n!'), Vivekananda naturally associated with the celebrated words of the *Katha-Upanishad*: *Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata*, (I.iii.14). Vivekananda believes that 'To be weak is miserable/ Doing or suffering.' It is interesting to note in this connection what Vivekananda boldly said about Milton's Satan in the course of his third lecture on the *Bhagavad-Gita*: 'There is only one sin. That is weakness. When I was a boy I read Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The only good man I had any respect for was Satan. The only saint is that soul that never weakens, faces everything, and determines to die game.'⁵ Vivekananda's 'enthusiasm' for Satan was also that of Milton himself. William Blake pertinently points out that Milton was 'of the Devil's party without knowing it'. But we are digressing. Our contention is that Vivekananda is always up in arms against all kinds of weakness.

We have to be game for anything, game to do anything, no matter how dangerous it is. This is what Shakespeare's Prince of Denmark meant when he said that 'the readiness is all' and when Edgar in *King Lear* echoed the words of Hamlet: 'Ripeness is all.' We have to be real men and women—bold and courageous and strong—who live and die manfully and gracefully, not lily-livered cowards who die many times before their deaths. ('The valiant never taste of death but once.') As Vivekananda himself exhorts us in the same discussion immediately afterwards:

Stand up and die game! ...Do not add one lunacy to another. Do not add your weakness to the evil that is going to come. That is all I have to say to the world. Be strong! ...You talk of ghosts

and devils. We are the living devils. The sign of life is strength and growth. The sign of death is weakness. Whatever is weak, avoid! It is death. If it is strength, go down into hell and get hold of it! There is salvation only for the brave. 'None but the brave deserves the fair.' [John Dryden, 'Alexander's Feast'] None but the bravest deserves salvation.⁶

Weakness is a myth. Vivekananda wants us to wake up to reality:

All weakness, all bondage is imagination. Speak one word to it, it must vanish. Do not weaken! There is no other way out. ...Stand up and be strong! No fear.

'There is only one sin. That is weakness. When I was a boy I read Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The only good man I had any respect for was Satan. The only saint is that soul that never weakens, faces everything, and determines to die game.'

No superstition. Face the truth as it is! If death comes—that is the worst of our miseries—let it come! We are determined to die game. That is all the religion I know.⁷

Can anything be more emphatic and more inspiring? At the moment, however, Vivekananda's religion is anthropocentric. Rabindranath Tagore, from another viewpoint, thinks in terms of willing acceptance of God's ways in a famous song: 'If you come, O Lord, assuming the form of death, I'll die clasping your feet.'

Strength, strength is what Vivekananda speaks to me from every page. The two words that we find coming out like

5. CW, vol. 1, p. 480.

6. CW, vol. 1, p. 480.

7. CW, vol. 1, pp. 480–1.

bombs from the writings of Vivekananda, bursting like bombshells upon our ignorant and jaded sensibility, are the words *fearlessness* and *strength*. The words have such tremendous power because they have all the might of the Upanishads behind them. As our guru (Swamiji) has himself reminded us in one of his sayings, he hardly quotes anything but the Upanishads. And the only idea by which he is immensely fascinated and which he always tends to quote is *strength*. The quintessence of the Vedas and Vedanta and all, thinks Vivekananda, lies in that one word. One of his favourite quotations comes

'It is the man of action, the lion-heart, that the Goddess of Wealth resorts to.'

from the *Mundaka Upanishad* (III.ii.4): *Nāymātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ*, The soul cannot be realized by the weak. From *Hitopadesha* he often quotes another saying: *Udyoginam puruṣasimhamupaiti lakṣmīḥ*, which he himself translates as: 'It is the man of action, the lion-heart, that the Goddess of Wealth resorts to.'

It is in this context that we have to appreciate those oft-quoted lines in which Vivekananda attaches more importance to the game of football than to the study of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. If the bold and paradoxical statement is an exaggeration, it is the exaggeration of a vital truth:

First of all, our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. These are bold words; but I have to say them, for I love you. I know where the shoe pinches. I have gained a little experience. You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will under-

stand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Krishna better with a little of strong blood in you. You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the Atman when your body stands firm upon your feet, and you feel yourselves as men.⁸

He who has learnt this truth, has learnt the art of living.

III

Mens sana in corpore sano (a sound mind in a sound body), for that must be our prayer, says Juvenal. But mere prayer will not suffice, as God helps only those who help themselves. How can we help ourselves in this? Through thought, will and faith. First of all, we have to believe in ourselves. The true atheist, according to Vivekananda, is he who does not believe in himself. He further asserts that the history

Vivekananda clearly reveals the secret of greatness to us: it is abiding faith, faith in ourselves and faith in divine providence. But of the two the first is infinitely more important.

of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. (He might have had the words of Thomas Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship* in mind: 'The history of the world is but the biography of great men.') That faith it is which calls out the divinity within and enables us to do anything. So we fail only when we do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. Death comes the moment a man or a nation loses faith. (This faith corresponds to an extent to the Biblical 'vision' in the saying: 'Where there is no vision, the people perish', *Proverbs*, 29:18.)

Vivekananda clearly reveals the secret

8. CW, vol. 3, p. 242.

of greatness to us: it is abiding faith, faith in ourselves and faith in divine providence. But of the two the first is infinitely more important. We may have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of our mythological deities (and also in all the deities that the foreigners have introduced), but if we have no faith in ourselves, Swamiji warns us, there is no salvation for us. Actually, he believes that everything is possible for the soul. If there is sin—the only sin is to say that one is weak, or others are weak.

The right kind of thinking is very important. Negative thinking has to be avoided like poison. Thoughts are things, so we have to be very careful about what kinds of thoughts we have in our mind and we nurture. To quote Vararuchi, *Yādṛśī bhāvanā yasya, siddhirbhavati tādrśī*, one's success depends upon the kind of thought one has

Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong,

'Never mind the struggles, the mistakes. I never heard a cow tell a lie, but it is only a cow—never a man. So never mind these failures, these little backslidings; hold the ideal a thousand times, and if you fail a thousand times, make the attempt once more.'

strong you will be; if you think yourselves impure, impure you will be; if you think yourselves pure, pure you will be. This teaches us not to think ourselves as weak, but as strong, omnipotent, omniscient. No matter that I have not expressed it yet, it is in me.⁹

As we are by our very nature infinite, Vivekananda urges us never to say 'No', never to say 'I cannot'. Even time and space are as nothing compared with our nature. We can do anything and everything, because we are almighty. Vivekananda sent

his clarion call to his sisters and brothers of America (and through them to all people everywhere) who assembled at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago:

Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.¹⁰

To be successful, we must have tremendous perseverance, tremendous will. Vivekananda expects the persevering soul to exclaim: 'I will drink the ocean! At my will, mountains will crumble up!' We must have that sort of boundless energy, that sort of indomitable will. We are sure to reach the goal provided we work hard enough. 'Work

hard'—that is a must. Nothing worthwhile comes easy in this life; we have to pay for everything. Be ready to pay the price and actually pay it when the time comes; only then can we get something of value, something precious (from the material as well as the spiritual point of view), even that one pearl of great price, rare as it is.

As Rabindranath has pointed out, we have to undergo some kind of suffering or the other for all the greatest experiences of the earthly life: the intense affection of the mother, the sublime love of the wife, the

9. CW, vol. 3, p. 130.

10. CW, vol. 1, p. 11.

profound ardour of the religious devotee (to mention only a few). Man is born unto trouble. Why not be prepared to face some suffering in life—and face it with fortitude? Gird up thy loins like a man. As everybody has his cross to bear, why not bear it with a smile? Even if it is at first a forced smile on our lips, it will, through our perseverance, gradually ripen into a smiling attitude of acceptance of the mysterious (and, by giving them at least the benefit of the doubt, also ultimately beneficent) ways of God. As Browning's melon-seller might have reminded us: 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God/ And evil not receive?'

What if we fail? No matter. Fail we alone in words and deeds? 'Never mind the struggles, the mistakes. I never heard a cow tell a lie, but it is only a cow—never a man. So never mind these failures, these little backslidings; hold the ideal a thousand

Infinite are the powers of the mind. We can enjoy their benefits if we develop the power of concentration. Most of us have a very restless mind—call it the grasshopper mind, if you will—flitting from one object to another in a trice.

times, and if you fail a thousand times, make the attempt once more.'¹¹ We have to be as patient as the earth, or as patient as the bright star, Nature's patient, sleepless eremite. The sky is the limit for our patience and endurance. As the Holy Mother Sarada so beautifully suggested, it is not for nothing that our alphabet has three s's. They should all remind us that we should have to *endure* (the Bengali synonym *sahya* begins with an s) and endure and endure. If endurance is all, why not make a virtue of necessity?

In an impassioned passage, Vivek-

ananda asks his fellow-man the reason of his sadness. To the Swami, it all seems so foolish. 'Why weepst thou, brother?', he asks. 'There is neither death nor disease for thee,' he continues. 'Why weepst thou, brother? There is neither misery nor misfortune for thee. Why weepst thou brother? Neither change nor death was predicated of thee. Thou art Existence Absolute.'¹² Vivekananda feels more than sympathy for his fellow-mortal—it is actually empathy. His heart goes out in love and compassion. He feels so close to man that he cannot help using the second person singular number when he addresses man here.

Misery and death should have no sting for us. If we are neither repelled by misery, nor repulsed by death, then only can we have the blessings of Kali the Mother, the Dark Time-Goddess:

Who dares misery love,
And hug the form of Death,
Dance in Destruction's dance,
To him the Mother comes.¹³

IV

'The mind is its own place, and in itself/ Can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n', says Milton's Satan, echoing Hamlet's words that 'There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.' The basic truth of this idea, not unacknowledged by William James, is being increasingly recognized by contemporary psychologists and psychiatrists but Vivekananda was aware of its significance much earlier. Facts are nothing; what matters is our attitude to facts. Ideas are nothing, unless we live them. And wrong ideas will always undo us. The choice is ours. We may single out one idea in order to nurture it to fruition but that idea must be related to our ideals and values

11. CW, vol. 2, p. 152.

12. CW, vol. 5, p. 275.

13. CW, vol. 4, p. 384.

(without them man is rudderless in his voyage on the turbulent sea of life). Only then can we be truly successful:

Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life—think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, and this is the way great spiritual giants are produced. Others are mere talking machines. If we really want to be blessed, and make others blessed, we must go deeper.¹⁴

Infinite are the powers of the mind. We can enjoy their benefits if we develop the power of concentration. Most of us have a very restless mind—call it the grasshopper mind, if you will—flitting from one object to another in a trice. It is like what the French call *l'oiseau sûr la branche*, the bird on the branch of a tree, which is there only for a moment and continues to fly away or keeps going off at a tangent. We have to get the better of this restlessness of the mind if we want to attain success in life. Success means the ability to do at least one thing perfectly, be that even dusting rooms or washing utensils. All of us have been gifted with at least one talent. That one talent should not lodge with us useless.

Vivekananda points out, like Ruskin and Carlyle before him, that nothing as work is too small or too low if it is done well; no work, as work, is superior or inferior. We are expected to do our own duty well (another's, however great, is dangerous for us), even if we have to face death for it, that is the injunction of the *Gita* and it is wholeheartedly approved by Vivekananda. We can do the work apportioned to us much better if we know how to concentrate, because con-

centration is the key to expertise. A deeply religious saint of the Punjab—Sant Nikuramji—used to say that you can do everything much better if you mix some *Rāmarasa* with your work. What a beautiful and spiritual synonym for 'concentration'! Whatever we do, we should devote our whole mind, heart, and soul to it—that is the advice of Vivekananda. He tells us of a *sannyāsin* whom he once met and who cleansed his brass cooking utensils, making them shine like gold, with as much care and attention as he bestowed on his worship and meditation.

If words are a tremendous force ('the word is Brahma'), so are thoughts, and they are even more potent. They are the hidden power behind words. That is why we can never be too careful about the thoughts we think (and, of course, also of the words we speak). We must always think in terms of our health in order to remain healthy and in terms of others' health in order to keep them healthy. For thoughts, like words, vibrate, and this vibration has a far-reaching effect. Thinking yields place to feeling. Good feeling like faith, hope, serenity, kindness, generosity, and joy have to be cultivated. The Seven Deadly Sins of pride, anger, envy, lust, gluttony, avarice, and sloth have to be shunned at any cost, for that way madness lies. Our conscience is always there to tell us what is good or what is bad. That which is good is infinitely preferable, always and everywhere. 'Every good thought that we send to the world without thinking of any return,' Vivekananda writes in 'Karma Yoga', 'will be stored up there and break one link in the chain, and make us purer and purer, until we become the purest of mortals.'¹⁵

Vivekananda strongly believes that it is our own mental attitude which makes the

14. CW, vol. 1, p. 177.

15. CW, vol. 1, p. 116.

world what it is for us. And he is absolutely right. Coleridge, in his own poetic way, utters the same truth in 'Dejection: an Ode': '...we receive but what we give,/ And in our life alone does Nature live:/ Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!' Vivekananda writes:

Our thoughts make things beautiful, our thoughts make things ugly. The whole world is in our own minds. Learn to see things in the proper light. First, believe in this world—that there is meaning behind everything. Everything in the world is good, is holy and beautiful.¹⁶

Cheerfulness is a must for every person, whether he or she is a householder or a

'The first sign that you are becoming religious is that you are becoming cheerful. When a man is gloomy, that may be dyspepsia, but it is not religion.... If you have a clouded face, do not go out that day, shut yourself up in your room. What right have you to carry this disease out into the world?'

hermit. A good life is impossible without cheerfulness, and we must avoid dejection like a plague, for, depression of spirits is as deadly and equally contagious. We have no right to spoil other people's happiness. Pay heed to the wise counsel of Vivekananda:

The first sign that you are becoming religious is that you are becoming cheerful. When a man is gloomy, that may be dyspepsia, but it is not religion.... If you have a clouded face, do not go out that day, shut yourself up in your room. What right have you to carry this disease out into the world?¹⁷

V

We have to be bold on the battlefield of life, however much we are tempted to play the coward. It is only by being boldly aggressive that we can achieve our victory. Vivekananda tells us of a personal experience of his. Once when he was in Varanasi, he was passing through a place infested with huge and surly monkeys. They did not want to allow Vivekananda to pass through their street and so they howled and shrieked and clutched at his feet (to use his own words). He began to run, but the faster he ran, the faster came the monkeys and began to bite at him. There was hardly any possibility of escape. But just then he met a stranger who called out to him, 'Face the brutes'. And face them he did, and the monkeys fell back and finally fled. Vivekananda learnt a lesson for all life and taught us the same lesson—face the trouble, face it boldly. That is the only way to get rid of it.

A worthy disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda not only teaches us how to live beautifully, he also teaches us how to die gracefully. He was ever a fighter—a valiant soldier in life's battle. When towards the end of 1898, he was suffering from asthma, he said: 'Life is a battle. Let me die fighting.' It seems as if he were echoing the words of Robert Browning:

I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my
eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past. ('Prospice')

As in the poems of Browning, the voice of a brave warrior is often heard in the words of Vivekananda. In his second lecture on the *Gita*, he inspires us to follow in his footsteps of our intrepid leader—our friend, philosopher and guide—Vivekananda, the fearless:

...stand up and fight! Not one step

16. CW, vol. 1, p. 441.

17. CW, vol. 1, pp. 264–5.

back, that is the idea. ...Fight it out, whatever comes. Let the stars move from the sphere! Let the whole world stand against us! Death means only a change of garment. What of it? Thus fight! ... Die game. ...You are infinite, deathless, birthless. Because you are infinite spirit, it does not befit you to be a slave. ...Arise! Awake! Stand up and fight!¹⁸

This is the last word on the art of living, on holy living and holy dying: the wisest and the best.

The mortal Vivekananda is no more in the land of the living but his vibrant and loving words are a source of great inspiration for all mankind. The mortal Vivek-

18. CW, vol. 1, p. 461.

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ananda is spiritually alive to guide us—an even greater source of inspiration. As he himself said to Eric Hammond in London in 1896, in words reminiscent of the *Gita*:

It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body—to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God.¹⁹

Vivekananda has not ceased to work. The Light is there to guide—a burning and a shining light. How long are we going to remain static encircled by gloom? How long, O Lord, how long? □

19. CW, vol. 5, p. 414.

Respected Swami,

Please accept my respectful pranam. I felt extremely honoured and am thankful to you to receive your letter dated 21 May '96. Please forgive me for this delayed response.

...I have been benefited tremendously by the Ramakrishna Mission in New York. Our going to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre in New York every Sunday has changed my life-style—now it is mentally much more easy and comfortable, even on bad days. I feel very much indebted to (1) Swami Vivekananda for establishing such a centre for our spiritual light; (2) Swami Adiswarananda; (3) Swami Tathagatananda; and (4) my husband (who passed away four years ago), who encouraged me to come into the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement.

From my personal experiences, I am more than sure that if this Vedanta Message reaches all the householders, especially the mothers, in the East and in the West, then this world will be a much better place to live in. My sincere thanks to Swamiji for bringing Vedanta to the western world, so that even now, a 100 years later, a most ordinary average person like me is enjoying and deriving benefit by the great teaching.

Sincerely Yours

Hasi Das
New York

Vedanta, a System to Unfold Divinity

BANSI PANDIT

Sri Bansi Pandit, who resides in Illinois, presents some of the principal ideas of Vedanta, showing how they form a scheme to help human beings discover their divinity. Sri Pandit is the author of the Hindu Mind.

The Vedantic vision of the Reality is expressed in the following revelation of the *Rig-Veda*: 'Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti', meaning 'Truth is one, the wise call it by various names.' This declaration implies that Reality possesses infinite potential, power and intelligence and, as such, cannot be limited by a single name or form. Thus, Hindus view Reality as having two aspects: impersonal and personal. In Vedanta the impersonal aspect of Reality is called *Nirguna Brahman*. This aspect of the Divine has no attributes and, as such, is not an object of prayer but of meditation and knowledge. *Nirguna Brahman* is nameless and formless Reality, beyond conception, beyond reasoning and beyond thought.

The personal aspect of Reality is known as *Saguna Brahman*, that is, Reality with attributes. *Saguna Brahman* represents more or less the same concept as the word 'God' in other religions and is the creator, sustainer and controller of the universe. Again, *Saguna Brahman* cannot be limited by one name or form, and is therefore worshipped by various names and in various forms, and as both male and female. From the male aspect, *Saguna Brahman* is called by such names as *Isvara*, *Parameśvara*, *Paramātmā*, *Maheśvara*, and *Puruṣa*. From the female aspect, Hindus refer to *Saguna Brahman* by names such as Divine Mother, *Durgā* and *Kālī*.

Hindus worship both the male and female aspects of *Saguna Brahman*, hereafter God or Divine, in many forms, called deities

or gods and goddesses (note lower case g). A deity (god or goddess) symbolizes a particular aspect of the Divine. For example, goddess *Sarasvati* symbolizes the aspect of God. Thus, if a Hindu wants to pray to the Divine for knowledge and understanding, he prays to *Sarasvati* for bestowing knowledge upon him. This does not mean that *Sarasvati* (or any other Hindu deity) is separate from or independent of God. Just as sunlight cannot be conceived to have independent existence from the sun itself, a deity is not conceived to have a separate existence from God. Thus, Hindu gods and goddesses symbolize various aspects of the Divine and a devotee has the freedom to worship whichever aspect of the Divine he or she reveres most, based upon one's own mental constitution. This freedom of worship is the hallmark of Vedanta philosophy.

Hinduism is often labelled as a religion of 330 million gods. This misunderstanding arises when people fail to grasp the symbolism of the Hindu pantheon. According to Hindu scriptures, the living beings are not apart from God, since He lives in each and everyone of them in the form of spirit (*Atman*). Thus each living being is an individualized and particularized manifestation of God. The number 330 million was simply used to give a symbolic expression to the fundamental Hindu doctrine that God lives in the hearts of all living beings.

A Hindu uses a picture or an image (usually made of metal, wood or clay) to

symbolize a deity. The picture or the image is used as an object of concentration to help worship, contemplation and meditation. The image itself is not God, but serves as a symbol of God. 'We associate our ideas of infinity with the image of the blue sky, or of the sea. We also naturally connect our idea of holiness with the image of a church, a mosque, or a cross. The Hindus have associated the ideas of holiness, purity, truth, omnipresence with different images and forms,' says Swami Vivekananda. To further illustrate, if somebody asks me, 'Where is the sky?' I would most probably raise my finger up pointing towards the sky. My finger is not the sky, but it points towards the sky. Similarly, an image is not God, but a pointer which directs the attention of the devotee towards the Divine.

Hindu sages tell us that the same Atman (spirit, or soul) dwells in all beings. Thus, all human beings have a common source and are interconnected in a subtle way. The reason humans are different from

existence associated with the Atman: the bound state and the liberated state. In the bound state, the Atman appears to be associated with a physical body. As a result of this association, the Atman is called *jīvā*, individual soul. The *jīvā* is subject to *māyā* (cosmic ignorance), which causes it to forget its divine nature and commit mistakes in the world. In the liberated state, the *jīvā* gets free of *māyā*, discovers its true nature as the Atman. Thus the *jīvā* attains spiritual perfection (*mokṣa*) and consequently enjoys union with God. Liberation simply means freedom of the individual from ignorance, that is, realization of one's own true nature, which is inherently divine.

Vedanta tells us that an individual is not born a sinner, but errs due to ignorance. Just as darkness quickly disappears upon the appearance of light, an individual's delusion vanishes when he or she gains self-knowledge. A sinner of today is thus a potential saint of tomorrow. Self-effort and guru's grace are all that are needed for indi-

An individual goes through the repeated cycles of birth and death in accordance with the Law of Karma, until he attains spiritual perfection. Self-knowledge is the birth-right of each and every individual. However, the individual must perform virtuous actions (niṣkāma-karma) to attain spiritual perfection.

each other (or at least they think they are different) is that the manifestation of Atman in a physical body depends upon the construction of the physical body. Just as the same electricity manifests differently in different appliances, depending upon the physical construction of the appliance, the same Atman generates diverse personalities in different human bodies, based upon their physical constitution.

Vedanta declares that the Atman is immortal and divine. In the Vedantic view, therefore, an individual is potentially divine and eternally perfect. There are two states of

vidual transformation to occur. Hindu sages tell us that there is no intrinsic evil power (Satan or devil) in Nature that opposes God's will. There is no power other than God's power. Cosmic ignorance is the only driving force for humans to commit mistakes. Thus, in Vedanta, there are no concepts of devil, Satan, sin or permanent hell. An individual goes through the repeated cycles of birth and death in accordance with the Law of Karma, until he attains spiritual perfection. Self-knowledge is the birth-right of each and every individual. However, the individual must perform virtuous actions (*niṣkāma-karma*) to attain spiritual perfection.

The word karma literally means 'deed, or action'. According to the Law of Karma, every human action inevitably leads to results, good or bad, depending upon the moral quality of the deed. There is no such thing as action without results. 'As we sow, so shall we reap' is the law that governs all deeds. Actions that are morally good produce good results, and those that are morally bad produce bad results. The Law of Karma conserves the moral consequences of all actions, and conditions our present and/or future lives accordingly. In part, the present life is determined by the results of past deeds: we are the effects of our own infinite past. Every child that is born in this world is born to work out its own past deeds.

The doctrine of karma is the answer provided by Vedanta to the question of suffering and inequalities in the world: 'Why should one person be different from another in his looks, abilities and character? Why is one born a king and another a beggar? A just and merciful God cannot create such inequalities', says Swami Vivekananda. The doctrine of karma, the law of actions and their retribution, can be viewed as the law of causation (cause and effect) applied to the moral realm. The law that every action has a reaction works in the scientific world as well as in the moral world.

The doctrine of karma is based upon the theory of cause and effect, and differs from the Western notion that God punishes the wicked and rewards the virtuous.

According to the Law of Karma, we are the effects and we are the causes. What we did in the past has determined in part what we are today, and what we do today will determine our tomorrow. There is no supernatural power that creates our destinies, and nothing happens by mere chance or fate. We are the creators of our own destinies. If we

are unhappy, it has been of our doing. We can be happy, if we want to be so. Does this mean that we are the helpless creatures of our past (at least for the present) and that there is nothing we can do about it? The answer lies in a clear understanding of how the doctrines of karma and free-will work.

The past karma of an individual consists of two parts, *prārabdha karma* and *sañcita karma*. The *prārabdha karma* is that part of past karma which is to bear fruit in the present life of the individual. The *sañcita karma* is the accumulated karma of the previous births, which is to bear fruit in the future. The *prārabdha karma* of an individual may be

The past karma of an ordinary human being is either good, bad, or mixed. An individual's particular incarnation is determined by the overall balance of the prārabdha karma. If the overall balance is positive (i.e., good), the individual will be born in an environment that is naturally conducive to the onward progress of his soul.

imagined to consist of two components: fixed and variable. The fixed component of karma is beyond our control and consists of that component of the past karma which determines our parents, the family and the country in which we must be born, the general features of the physical body that we will eventually develop, and the social and religious environment in which we must grow.

During one's childhood, the variable component of the past karma remains latent in the subconscious mind in the form of tendencies (*saṁskāras*). It is this variable part of the past karma that one can overcome later by initiative and free-will. The level of success one can achieve in diluting the effects of the variable component, however,

depends upon the power of the *saṁskāras* and the strength of the individual will.

The past karma of an ordinary human being is either good, bad, or mixed. An individual's particular incarnation is determined by the overall balance of the *prārabdha* karma. If the overall balance is positive (i.e., good), the individual will be born in an environment that is naturally conducive to the onward progress of his soul. In a particular incarnation, only those innate tendencies (*saṁskāras*) are manifested for which conditions are favourable in that incarnation. The right environment is essential for the manifestation of the *saṁskāras*. For example, if an individual is born destined to be a professor (because of his overall good karma), and if he had been a gambler in his past incarnations, his innate gambling tendency will not find the right environment to manifest itself in the academic environment of his vocation. However, if he happens to be in the company of gamblers at a social get-together, he will exhibit a natural love for gambling because of the residual impressions of his past karma.

Every human action, be it physical or mental, produces two effects. First, depending upon the moral quality of an action, the appropriate fruits of the action will be rewarded later, either in the same life or in a future life. Second, the action leaves residual impressions (*saṁskāras*) on the subconscious mind of the individual. These *saṁskāras* influence the person's thought-waves (*vṛttis*) and thereby determine the character of the individual. Thus, the past *saṁskāras* determine one's present conduct, and this conduct affects one's store of *saṁskāras*, setting a chain of cause and effect. The Hindu scriptures declare thus: 'A man becomes good by performing good deeds and evil by performing evil deeds.

In the Vedantic view, the Atman is the

basis of will. Since the Atman is divine and immortal, the human will is potentially powerful. Due to the presence of the cosmic ignorance (*māyā* or *avidyā*), however, human will is generally weak, and the individual lacks firm spiritual conviction and God-consciousness. Human will can be sharpened and strengthened by yoga, meditation, prayers, positive thinking, right environment, and association (*satsaṅga*) with pure-minded persons. According to the philosophy of yoga, the negative thought-waves, which arise in the human mind due to the impressions of the past karma, can be neutralized by introducing positive thought-waves generated by the human will and right actions.

When an apple falls from a tree, the fall of the apple itself is caused by the law of gravitation. However, the consequences of this event are not determined only by the law of gravitation, but also by the law of conservation of energy. Just the same way, the consequences of human actions are determined by the doctrine of karma as well as the doctrine of free-will. The negative *saṁskāras* of the past karma can be overcome by human will. In Hindu view, what separate a saint and a sinner are only will and time. With right knowledge and effort, a sinner of today can be a saint of tomorrow. As Dr. Radhakrishnan said, 'The cards of life are given to us [in the form of *saṁskāras*], but we can play them as we wish, and win or lose, as we play.'

When one commits a heinous crime, two possibilities exist. Either the person is creating a brand new karma by misusing his free-will, or his action is motivated by the negative *saṁskāras* of his past karma. In either case he is totally responsible for his actions. He could have been helped if his free will had been strengthened by yoga, meditation, prayers, positive thinking, right environment, and association with holy persons (*satsaṅga*). This responsibility squarely

falls on society in general and on parents and teachers, in particular. The best time (and perhaps the only time!) to implant good *saṁskāras* in a person is when the person is still young and his negative *saṁskāras* are not yet ready to bear their bitter fruit. The children in modern societies are constantly subjected to the negative *saṁskāras* of violence perpetuated by radio and television, family conflicts, and lack of training on the part of parents to bring up their children.

Unfortunately, in modern societies more attention is given to development of the body than the mind. The educational institutions teach skills that enable one to make a living to maintain one's body, but no

Unfortunately, in modern societies more attention is given to development of the body than the mind. The educational institutions teach skills that enable one to make a living to maintain one's body, but no skills are generally taught to nourish one's mind.

skills are generally taught to nourish one's mind. We spend lots of money to buy soap and shampoo to clean our bodies, but there is nothing readily available to clean our minds. Yet it is only the mind that can accomplish (if it can!) the goal of life—happiness.

A religious philosophy is universal if its appeal is not restricted to any particular segment of humanity, religious group, nation, race, class, country or age. All religious philosophies of the world have some universal aspects, but all aspects of Vedanta are universal. The reason for this difference is that Vedanta does not derive its authority from the teachings of a single person or book. The spiritual experiences of the numerous sages and saints of yore form the foundation of Vedanta. A true spiritual ex-

perience is always rooted in the universal vision of mankind. The mystics of all religions have invariably held that beyond the apparent diversity of the physical phenomena is a perfect unity.

Thousands of years ago, the *rishis* (ancient sages and saints) discovered two basic universal principles: the spiritual oneness of all things and beings in the world, and the divine nature of the human being. The scholars tell us that Hindu sages were the first to conceive of a true Infinite, from which nothing is excluded. Thus, from its very inception, the foundation of Vedanta was cast into the bedrock of universalism.

The most daring universal hypothesis a human being has ever conceived of is '*Aham brahmāsmi*', implying 'I am the Infinite, the Very Infinite, from which the universe proceeds.' This Vedantic doctrine identifies every human being—regardless of race, religion, colour, sex, or geographic location—with divinity and prepares the ground for universal amity. Hindu sages have declared that no one is intrinsically superior or inferior to others: our individual past karmas have created us as unique individuals. But our differences are temporary and exist only at the psycho-physical level. All differences vanish when one attains self-knowledge through spiritual experience, the distinct goal of Vedanta.

One of Vedanta's greatest gifts to the world is the attitude of religious harmony. 'If one religion is true, then by the same logic all other religions are also true. This is authenticated by the fact that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character', declared Swami Vivekananda at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago. The Hindu scriptures declare, 'As the differ-

ent streams having their sources in difference places all mingle their waters in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.'

Hindus declare that blind faith and dogma are the two most vicious sources of conflict in the world; only reasoned faith can

Hindus declare that blind faith and dogma are the two most vicious sources of conflict in the world; only reasoned faith can ensure harmony in the world. A religion cannot dismiss reason, but must be founded on reason. One's deepest convictions must be vindicated by reason

ensure harmony in the world. A religion cannot dismiss reason, but must be founded on reason. One's deepest convictions must be vindicated by reason. Reason says that it is irreligion to perform religious actions which cause pain and discomfort to others. It is all right if an organized religion inspires its followers in a belief in the existence of God and prescribes a discipline to reach Him. At the same time, it is also important to recognize that God is above all religious systems, even though theologians may set limits to Him. 'I know that I myself owe it to thinking that I was able to retain my faith in religion...', says Dr. Schweitzer.

Another gift of Vedanta to mankind is the doctrine of *ahimsā* (non-violence). 'Non-violence in thought, word and deed is the highest morality', declare the Hindu scriptures. Without the true spirit of non-violence towards all forms of life, there can be no genuine peace in the world. For universal harmony, individual and social actions of people, and the economic and political actions of nations must be based upon the attitude of non-violence. A Vedantic vision of the world is thus:

- ❖ Where harmlessness to all creatures is the highest culture, service to the poor is the highest worship, compassion is the highest religion, truth is the highest law, and love for all God's creatures the highest philosophy.
- ❖ Where political, social and religious institutions and their leaders strive tirelessly to accept people of all races, colours and creeds, and respect their faiths and beliefs.
- ❖ Where all forms of life are revered as various expressions of the supreme Lord and *ahimsā* is the governing law.
- ❖ Where educational, political and economic systems are designed to assist individuals to unfold their highest potential.
- ❖ Where mothers, fathers, teachers and elders are revered, children are brought up with self-esteem, and the young are taught to respect intrinsic human values.

And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

—New Testament, St. Luke, 9, 23–5

Vedanta and Its Practice in Human Society

DR. SASANKA BHUSAN BANDYOPADHYAY

Dr. Bandyopadhyay has presented an interesting article on the daily application of the eternal Vedantic Truths found in the Upanishads to solve the problems facing societies today. An emeritus scientist and former Director of the Jute Technological Research Laboratory of the ICAR, he resides in Calcutta.

Vedanta is our spiritual heritage. It gives us the answer to the eternal quest of life, the final remedy for human sufferings, through the path of realization of the Self. Swami Vivekananda urged us to practise Vedanta in all walks of life, individually and collectively. Here are some practical hints.

Vedantic knowledge was revealed to men at different times, when the Vedic rituals were already in practice. Vedanta means the end-conclusions or essence of the Vedas. Those to whom this knowledge was revealed are known as Seers, since they directly realized the Truth, the Self, or Brahman, which is Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, and Bliss Absolute. They saw that this Truth is the basis of the manifested world. This knowledge, known as the Upanishads, was preserved through the process of hearing, memorising, and transferring down through a line of disciplined disciples. Much later it was put in written manuscripts.

By human society is meant a group of human beings seeking to live in amity and happiness, without fear and with sufficient amenities. Such a society must have harmony in its homes and also with its environment. In order to collectively evolve in the highest direction, a society has to cultivate amongst its members good human values, i.e., mutual love and respect; kindness and forbearance; self-sacrifice and truthfulness; above all, purity and serenity.

How to Overcome Unhappiness

At present we find our life interrupted by periods of suffering, both physical and mental. Most of the suffering is caused by our craving for enjoying life to the fullest extent. Despite the rapid increase in material prosperity, people in society suffer from mental conflicts and agony. Thus, in spite of all efforts to control and improve the external aspects of life, people remain unhappy and unfulfilled. However, the few wise and patient inquirers who, while trying to find a remedy for these increasing problems, turned their searching eyes from the outer world towards the inner Self, did gain Peace. The fortunate few who received guidance from illumined souls realized that happiness was not the goal but realization of supreme Peace which transcends both joy and sorrow.

In the *Chandogya-Upanishad*, the seeker Narada approached the Seer, Sanatkumara, for guidance. In response to the Seer's inquiry about what he wanted, Narada said, 'I have studied all the branches of learning—art, science, music, medicine, weaponry, astronomy, philosophy, as well as the sacred scriptures, but I have gained no peace. I have heard that he who knows the Self overcomes grief. I do not know the Self, so grief is ever my lot. Help me, I pray to you, to overcome grief'. Sanatkumara guided Narada to the realization of the Self, step by step, by persistent inquiries. First he said, 'Whatever you have read is only name.... Meditate on

name as Brahman.'

The discourse continued from name to speech, from speech to mind, from mind to will, and on to subtler and subtler regions, until Narada asked to know of the eternal Truth. Then the sage boldly proclaimed that, in the Infinite alone is there joy, there is no

'It is not for the sake of the husband, my beloved, that the husband is dear, but for the sake of the Self.' He continues this beautiful discourse and concludes: 'It is not for the sake of itself, my beloved, that anything whatsoever is esteemed, but for the sake of the Self.'

joy in the finite. This Infinite is the Self. Where one sees nothing but the One, hears nothing but the One, knows nothing but the One—there is the Infinite. The Infinite is immortal. The finite is mortal.

For the modern individual also, after attaining the state of Infinitude by knowing the truth of the Self, the source of eternal Joy, there is no need of running after the myriads of sense pleasures. Although the common man is not aware of this ideal, yet this inborn sense of Oneness is inherent in all. Once one becomes even slightly aware of this sense of unity, one's spiritual unfoldment begins to take place. As one's awareness deepens from material to subtler planes, his sense of unity expands. He realizes the existence of the Self within and he sees that same Self in all outside.

In human society, the sense of oneness, universal friendliness, is well manifest during a calamity. At other times, as the craving for pleasure and possession is prominent, quarrels increase and make people forget this sense of belongingness. The forgetfulness, the lack of awareness, the covering up of the innate sense of unity is termed igno-

rance, and is the cause of the degeneration of civilizations.

Once the knowledge of the real basis of all human relationships, of the nature of attachment, and of the nature of cravings for material enjoyment is gained, one can transcend the pitfalls of occasional forgetfulness and be in constant awareness, constant consciousness of that one Being. By such awareness one achieves supreme Happiness and supreme Peace.

In the *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad*, this knowledge of relationships was revealed by the sage Yajnavalkya to his wife Maitreyi, who refused to be bothered by transient material possessions and wanted to have something that would lead her to the state of immortality.

Yajnavalkya, out of the fullness of his heart, said: 'It is not for the sake of the husband, my beloved, that the husband is dear, but for the sake of the Self.' He continues this beautiful discourse and concludes: 'It is not for the sake of itself, my beloved, that anything whatsoever is esteemed, but for the sake of the Self.'

Next he tells Maitreyi the method of this profound attainment:

The Self, beloved Maitreyi, is to be known: Hear about it; reflect upon it; and meditate upon it. By knowing the Self, my beloved, through hearing, reflection and meditation, one comes to know all things.

Let the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the higher worlds, the gods, all creatures and all things, whatsoever, ignore him who thinks any of them as different from the Self.

Yajnavalkya then concludes his dis-

course by saying:

Where there is consciousness of the Self, individuality is no more. This it is, O my beloved, that I wanted to tell you.

Yet Maitreyi remains confused and so he further clarifies the Truth:

My beloved, let nothing I have said confuse you. But meditate well on the truth that I have spoken. As long as there is duality, one sees the other, one hears the other, one smells the other, one speaks to the other, one thinks of the other, one knows the other. But when for the illumined soul the all is dissolved in the Self, who is there to be seen by whom, who is there to be smelt by whom, who is there to be heard by whom, who is there to be spoken to by whom, who is there to be thought of by whom, who is there to be known by whom? Ah, Maitreyi, my beloved, the Intelligence which reveals all, by what shall it be revealed? By whom shall the knower be known?

As this reality, the Self, the Atman, behind all relationships gradually unfolds in a person, the individual's heart expands and accepts all in its bosom and tends to become the Infinite, the Self; a small society tends to become a World Society.

Application of the Knowledge of the Atman

This truth of universal relationships, ever present in Sri Ramakrishna, found expressions in his utterances: 'Not compassion to jivas, but service to them as Shiva.' 'Recognize all as God's manifestations and serve them.'

When Swami Vivekananda (Naren), the foremost disciple of Sri Ramakrishna's was a boy sitting at his Master's feet, he heard those profound utterances. His pure mind was receptive to the deep truth they

contained. The clarity of these statements threw a wonderful light on the practical application of the philosophy of non-dualism to the everyday world. As Brahman alone exists in all, a non-dualist cannot help but love all and serve all. Love, in the true sense of the word, is not possible unless one sees God in others. To Naren, the Master's words reconciled the paths of knowledge and action. An illumined man need not remain inactive—he may commune with Brahman through service to other embodied beings, who are in truth so many forms of the one Brahman.

This profound truth worked in the mind of Swami Vivekananda during his wandering days in India and during his first

As Brahman alone exists in all, a non-dualist cannot help but love all and serve all. Love, in the true sense of the word, is not possible unless one sees God in others.

visit to America. He realized the universal need for the application of this teaching, and boldly proclaimed this truth broadcast to all. After coming back to India he founded the Ramakrishna Mission, expanding that concept of service to the field of food and clothing, housing and medicare, secular and spiritual education. Such service would give one an opportunity to serve the living Brahman in His embodied form; and to the person served it provides the basic needs of life and a livelihood. Through such a process human society as a whole is directly aided in its effort to help people manifest their true individuality, their true divinity which is the birth-right of all.

Those who are imbued with the ideal of service to God in man need not limit the application to those in distress only. This practice is to be extended to all aspects of

life, particularly to the place of one's daily work. The recipient of the service, be it an individual or the entire community at large, is the embodiment of God. The truth of this statement is to be experienced in one's own life by daily efforts to work in the right spirit. Such noble service would bring a deeper satisfaction and more peace of mind to man, than by only adding more and more to one's remuneration. Unfortunately, the application of these truths are not easily understood by today's work-force, engrossed as they are in the idea of personal sufferings due to insufficient wages.

However, the feelings of the workers could be improved if oriented towards the attitude of worshipful service. If such a practice gets started at the level of top executives

If one would try to discipline one's life, as was prescribed for Narada, by gradually reducing the cravings for material pleasures and proceeding step by step towards the realization of the highest joy, then one's life will be fulfilled.

of organizations, the practicality of these truths will be realized. Being imbued with the attitude of service towards God in man, nay, towards God as the society as a whole, the executives may reorganize their production in a noble way. They will still fetch reasonable profit, but will also uplift both the customers and the workers. Such ideas have already percolated through the management circles, where the executives are showing interest in making meditation a part of their daily routine.

Its Application in the Schools

In the field of education, the reciprocity of the Divine, manifested as the teacher and the taught, is clearly expressed in the following invocation found in some Upanishads:

*Om, May Brahman protect us,
May He guide us;
May He give us strength and right
understanding.
May love and harmony be with us all.
Om, Peace! Peace! Peace.*

The invocation, to be recited by both the teacher and the taught, clearly indicates that fruitful teaching can be achieved when there is love and harmony between the teacher and the student, and joint efforts are made to cultivate mental strength and proper understanding for the assimilation of the subject of study. Teaching is never a one-way process, action and reaction has to be constantly analysed, and, for this purpose, close proximity of the teacher and the student is needed. The process has to be maintained at every stage, from the kindergarten school to the research level at the university. During study, guidance and strength as well as protection from external and internal disturbances are needed. For this purpose help from the Divine is sought.

On Attaining Happiness

Happiness is an important factor in the lives of individuals in a human society. It is the motive force behind human activity. As such, most people are deluded by instant pleasure, easily available from bits of transient material objects, without caring to remember that such happiness does not last long and is always accompanied by an equal, and sometimes a greater, amount of misery. Lasting happiness, as Sanatkumara pointed out to Narada, lies in the Infinite alone, the Self, the Brahman.

To inculcate in the common man the vastness of this highest degree of happiness or joy, the *Taittiriya-Upanishad* takes resort to a system of gradation or quantification of happiness at higher and higher levels of existence, taking human happiness as the unit. The Upanishad then takes up the joy of the

celestial Gandharvas, the joy of the Pitris, of the Devas, of the Karma Devas, of the ruling Devas, of Indra, of Brihaspati, and of Prajapati, one after the other, and finally, at the eleventh level of existence, the joy of Brahman. The joy at each level of existence is one hundred times the joy at the previous level, but at each level, according to the Upanishad, 'No less joy than the joy of that level has the sage to whom the Self has been revealed, and who is without craving.'

If one would try to discipline one's life, as was prescribed for Narada, by gradually reducing the cravings for material pleasures and proceeding step by step towards the realization of the highest joy, then one's life will be fulfilled. This supreme Goal is within human power. The more people struggle to reach this height, quicker will the path of building a blissful society be established.

On Freedom from Fear

Freedom from fear is a major criterion of an ideal society. Whatsoever measures we may take in the form of policing or defence preparedness, our sense of fear will not lessen. Eventually the source of fear itself has to be overcome. This can be done initially through the Upanishadic invocations and daily spiritual practices, and ultimately by individual realization of the Divinity within. That realization will put an end to fear itself. The idea of the existence of something separate from one's own Self is the source of fear, as the *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad* says: 'When no one else exists, there is no cause for fear.'

The *Taittiriya-Upanishad* further states:

When a man finds his existence and unity in the Self, which is the basis of life, which is beyond the senses, which is formless, inexpressible, beyond all predicates, then alone does he transcend fear. So long as there is the least idea of separation from that, there is fear. To the

man who thinks himself learned, yet knows not himself as Brahman, Brahman, which drives away all fear, appears as fear itself.

On the Development of Human Values

Human values are to be developed in man as he proceeds on the path of self-realization. Purity, control of the senses, and truthfulness are essential for a strong foun-

The major requirements for achieving an ideal human society are to be found in the Upanishadic injunctions. They give clear, precise directions for moulding man to attain the highest happiness, the realization of the Self, the ultimate goal.

dation in life. As these qualities fully mature and become refined, then, as Sanatkumara said in his instructions to Narada in the *Chandogya-Upanishad*, the following will take place naturally:

When the senses are purified, the heart is purified; when the heart is purified, there is a constant and unceasing remembrance of the Self; when there is constant and unceasing remembrance of the Self, all bonds are loosened and freedom is attained.

The *Kathopanishad* also says: 'By study a man cannot know It, if he desists not from evil, if he controls not his senses, if he quietens not his mind, and practises not meditation.' Thus, the rationale for practising moral virtues is clear. If the quality of life is refined, then while living in the body one can experience the exquisite awareness of that One source of all Joy and Beauty and Peace.

The development of a well-controlled ideal society and its sustenance depends on the progress made by each individual in

manifesting and realizing that supreme Self, the beloved Lord, Brahman, as the *Chandogya-Upanishad* asserts: 'He who knows, meditates upon and realizes this truth of the Self, finds that everything—primal energy, ether, fire, water, and all other elements, mind, will, concentration, speech, sacred hymns, and scriptures, indeed the whole universe issues forth from It....' It is written, 'He who realizes the eternal truth does not see death, nor illness, nor pain. He sees everything as the Self, and obtains all.'

Conclusion

The major requirements for achieving an ideal human society are to be found in the Upanishadic injunctions. They give clear, precise directions for moulding man to attain the highest happiness, the realization of the Self, the ultimate goal. An individual may choose for himself, with the guidance of an illumined soul, the best method of conduct to adopt for reaching that goal.

It is true that, normally, common man avoids such an apparently austere and abstract way of life. Often, after finding that all other ways simply bring misery in the garb of pleasure, he begins to seek higher values and deeper meanings to life. Today what is necessary is to set forth some living examples of Vedantic ideals. Perhaps such a golden age has already been started with the advent of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Vivekananda was Sri Ramakrishna's select disciple and the main mouth-piece of his message. He boldly declared that he had taught nothing new. Whatever he had taught was to be found in the Upanishads. His personal life shows the practical application of those ancient teachings. The Upanishads are ever living, practical precepts for all to utilize. Swamiji's series of lectures on Practical Vedanta elaborates clearly the method of applying these truths in our daily lives. Let us all enter into that area of practical application and help usher in the golden age. □



Mrs. J.H. Wright



Emma Thursby—noted singer

Reviving Swami Vivekananda's Message for the Youth of Today

BIBHUTI MAZUMDER

Sri Mazumder, who resides in Baltimore, Madison, has presented an inspiring article on Swami Vivekananda's teachings which should be shared with the youth of today. The application of his message will be a source of positive help for the youth to mature in a positive direction.

Youth is the embodiment of idealism, vigour, energy, beauty, hope, and strength in every country. In short, the youth of today are the flowers which shall bloom into the leaders of society tomorrow. Yet, unfortunately, some of today's youth are drifting aimlessly through life. It seems that the intensity of their fire of idealism and hope has been clouded. The adults must fan that youthful flame with positive teaching and examples of noble living so that it will again blaze fully.

At such a time of despondency in various countries, it is worth recalling the timeless message of Swami Vivekananda to replenish the flame of inspiration and the main ideals of human life. The foundation of forces that sustain life and give meaning to life, such as love, faith and joy, operate behind everything we do. These forces direct the course of our lives and lead us to our destiny. These forces transcend the boundaries of time and space, for, they emanate from the essence of our being. They make us feel a unity with others. Swamiji fully realized his identity with these forces which go to direct every aspect of human character and conduct. While living in this world, how to remain in touch with one's true nature and thereby experience the fullness of existence and the true delight of living—is what Swamiji's message is all about.

This message full of hope for noble living seems to have been lost or clouded over at the present time. It should be revived by the adults to inspire the youth to overcome the chaos in today's society. The purpose of this essay is to focus on some main elements of Swamiji's message. It is hoped that this writing will enable today's youth to be inspired by Swamiji's message, develop some understanding of the essence of being human, and regain their clear direction in life.

The Essential Force of Love

As mentioned above, the essential forces that sustain life are love, faith, and joy. Firstly, love is a great transformative force that can clarify and help solve the problems of life which youth face today. Love can bring strength where there is weakness; joy where there is sorrow; and order where there is chaos. Through love we can unite our separate selves with others and feel our common pain and joy. Love comes from within ourselves. Our families and community are avenues for its expression. Youth of today need to belong and feel part of a Loving Being.

There are factors which enhance the environment and give love a positive direction. The responsibility of parents, grandparents and extended families plays a big role in developing a nurturing environment which develops positive emotions and val-

ues in the youth. Young people who blossom from such surroundings are grounded in their sense of self-respect. The community also plays an important role in shaping the young members. The community should have programmes that involve youth in cultural and meaningful activities. When youth spend time towards bettering themselves and the community, they develop a wholesome sense of identity and a feeling of purposefulness of life. This sense of oneness should be raised to the highest level as declared by Swami Vivekananda in his message and as explained in his lectures on Practical Vedanta.

When this sense of unity becomes expanded, the small 'I' becomes expanded to include all beings in the universe. As stated

Firstly, love is a great transformative force that can clarify and help solve the problems of life which youth face today. Love can bring strength where there is weakness; joy where there is sorrow; and order where there is chaos.

in the *Gita*: 'When one perceives the unity behind the diversity, and realizes the whole variety of beings as resting in the One and as an evolution from the One, his consciousness embraces the Supreme Consciousness.¹ As Swamiji said,

God, the underlying Reality of the universe exists in every being. There is one life and one world. Everything is that One. That One is manifesting Himself as many, as matter, spirit, mind, thought, and everything else. The infinite oneness of the Soul is the eternal sanction of all morality, that you and I are not only brothers...but that you and I are really One.... This Oneness is the rationale of

all ethics and all spirituality.²

The realization of this unity of existence is of utmost importance because through this experience only one knows the ultimate Reality that sustains life. Reality is the changeless, eternal Spirit that unifies us all. We belong to God. We are not separate. We all belong to the same Entity.

Through a comprehension of the Reality we get insight into the role of practical religion which is relevant to the growth of our young people. 'As manifested beings we appear to be separate, but the Reality is one,... and the more we think of ourselves as separate from the Whole, the more miserable we become.'³ This profound message of spiritual oneness, which is the highest love, is the only basis of hope for world peace. Not by sword, not by legislation, but by the realization of the unity of all beings will the world achieve harmony and peace amongst the different nations and religious faiths.

With the understanding of religions as being different paths to reach the same Reality and with one's daily efforts to practise this, the youth will be assisted in preventing the perpetuation of injustices that continue to be done in the name of religion. Swamiji reminded us,

No civilization can grow unless fanaticism, bloodshed, and brutality stop. No civilization can begin to lift up its head until we look charitably upon one another; and the first step towards that much-needed charity is to look charitably and kindly upon the religious convictions of others.⁴

According to Swamiji, religion is a

1. *Bhagavad Gita*, 13:30. [Hereafter *Gita*].

2. *The Complete Words of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1992), vol. 3, p. 189. [Hereafter CW].

3. *Ibid.* vol. 2, p. 334.

4. *Ibid.* vol. 3, pp. 187-8.

process of evolution for experiencing a larger and deeper view of life. It goes beyond personal pleasure, profit or loss, success or failure—to the highest dimension of love, service and self-sacrifice. Religion is the way to infinite inner growth from where we are now. This highest goal of religion is to be found within our own selves. It finds its expression in sharing love, goodness, and happiness with all creatures. As said in the *Gita*, 'Who shares the joys, and suffers the sorrow of every creature, within his own heart, as if they were his own joys and sorrows, he attains the highest state of spirituality.'⁵ The supreme goal of all religions is to nourish the soul to live and act in the freedom of the divine Spirit and in the awareness of that supreme Oneness.

The Essential Force of Faith

The second essential force of life is faith. Faith in ourselves comes from the awareness of the supreme strength, fullness of wisdom, and unquenchable joy within each one of us.

The second essential force of life is faith. Faith in ourselves comes from the awareness of the supreme strength, fullness of wisdom, and unquenchable joy within each one of us. The degradation in society which every country is facing today stems from the lack of faith in our true Self. Being ignorant of our true nature, we seek comfort in external solutions such as shallow relationships, drug abuse, and alcoholism. In our search for security, we have abandoned ourselves and are drifting away from the essential human values and virtues. By recovering faith in our inner power, we will gain hope and strength to grow into a productive and value-oriented society.

The *Gita* reminds us, 'In accordance with one's faith is the natural disposition of every person. A person is verily made up of faith. As a man's faith is, just so is he.'⁶ Faith is a great force capable of bringing into fruition that which otherwise seems to be impossible. Through one's faith one will know what one has to do to meet the challenges that come one's way in life. By the practical application of faith, youth can take a leap from the state of self-imposed limitations to an expanded vision of life's infinite possibilities. Swamiji reminds us,

All purity and perfection and strength are in the soul already. Faith in ourself...is the secret of greatness. If the faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practised, I am sure a very large portion of the evil and misery in life would have vanished.'⁷

Faith in oneself gives one confidence, which overcomes fear. Swamiji always emphasized fearlessness:

The only religion that ought to be taught is the religion of fearlessness.... fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that...breeds evil. And what causes fear? Ignorance of our own nature. If there is any sin in the world, it is weakness; avoid all weakness, for weakness is sin, weakness is death.'⁸

Youth can become whatever they aspire to provided they are aware of any shortcomings in themselves and commit themselves to correct them. Self-improvement, according to Swamiji, is a life-long undertaking. One need not have a timetable for the journey to perfection. One must be patient, steady, and gradually try to improve.

6. Ibid 17:3.

7. CW, vol. 2, p. 301.

8. Ibid. vol. 3, p. 160.

5. *Gita*, 6:32.

Swamiji reminds us,

The miseries of the world cannot be cured by physical help only. Until man's nature changes, these physical needs will always arise and miseries will always be felt. The only solution to this problem is to make mankind pure...spiritually strong and educated. We may convert every house in the country into a charity asylum, we may fill the land with hospitals, but the misery of man will still continue to exist until man's character changes.⁹

Through practice, when the deepest change occurs in one's inner being, then one's mind is lifted and one's connection with the One Chord of Existence is experienced. Then one begins to see clearly that God is in all beings and they are in God. One discovers that the highest way of worship-

Today's psychologists and therapists are beginning to understand that forgiving is not only a theological concept but also an act of will. They realize that forgiving is a decision to release negative thoughts of bitterness and resentment.

ing God is through loving, caring, and serving Him, the living God, in the manifest forms of the universe. Swamiji boldly declared,

You may invent an image through which to worship God, but a better image already exists, the living man. You may build a temple in which to worship God, and that may be good, but a better one, a much higher one already exists, the human body.¹⁰

The Essential Force of Joy

The third force of life is joy. Joy, the vitality of life, is an emotion of elation that removes pain, fear, and hatred. All youths long for joy. Through joy one transcends the boundaries of imperfections and reaches the hidden source of existence. There one experiences the wholeness of being and the sense of at-one-ment with others. Joy gives us a sense of self-esteem, freedom and hope, and it inspires us to be of service to others. The acts that open our hearts to human beings and to God also trigger joy in us. We experience joy by forgiving and by giving.

The Art of Forgiving

If one did not remember the past, one would not need to forgive. Since no human being is without error on the relative plane, and as people have the capacity to remember, the quality of forgiveness is to be nurtured. By forgiving, one can avoid pain, resolve differences, and relieve anger.

Forgiveness is a dynamic manifestation of love. It grows with maturity which has been gained from experiences of life. It is connected with true wisdom and compassion. It brings joy, peace, and laughter to life. Forgiveness does not consist in thinking oneself to be morally superior to others; nor does it indicate an act of cowardice or an excuse to put up with an unwanted person. Forgiveness is not excusing, condoning, pretending, ignoring, or suppressing feelings or actions. Forgiveness is a gift of the heart which one gives to others and which rebounds on the giver as an expansion of his inner being. Forgiveness cannot be forced on us. It comes from deep within. It lies at the heart of many religious teachings and is a way of life for their followers. Jesus Christ demonstrated it fully when he asked God to forgive his crucifiers. Christ inscribed forgiveness in his followers' hearts through the daily recital of the Lord's prayer, which says, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we for-

9. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 53.

10. Ibid. vol. 2, p. 313.

give those that trespass against us.

In daily life, forgiveness provides youth an opportunity to go beyond their ego and see things in their true perspective, beyond physical appearances. The moment one forgives, one corrects the misconception one had about an event or experience. To overcome the habit of holding on to any grievance, or resentment towards any person, and to overcome the feeling of vengeance, one should utilize the quality of forgiveness.

Today's psychologists and therapists are beginning to understand that forgiving is not only a theological concept but also an act of will. They realize that forgiving is a decision to release negative thoughts of bitterness and resentment. This positive attitude of mind results in the expansion of one's inner being, wounds of grief are healed, and schisms in relationships are bridged.

Swamiji's message of oneness, peace, and harmony inspires the youth to reconcile their differences and let the past go. Youths are not products of the past. They are the embodiment of the joy of the present and the future. The more youth live in the present, the more they can forgive defects, and this capacity of forgiveness will go on increasing.

The Art of Giving

The second aspect of joy is giving. The eternal flow of life is sustained by the Divine current of giving. The sacred intention of giving balances the polarities of existence and brings peace and harmony to life. To experience joy and happiness one should give others that which one cherishes most. Giving is actually receiving. As Swami Vivekananda said,

...the whole of life is giving, that na-

ture will force you to give. So, give willingly.... Whether you will it or not, you have to give. The moment you say, 'I will not', the blow comes; you are hurt. None is there but will be compelled, in the long run, to give up everything. And the more one struggles against this law, the more miserable one feels.... The sun is taking up water from the ocean, to return it in showers. You are a machine for taking and giving: you take in order to give,... A river is continually emptying itself into the ocean, and is continually filling up again. Bar not that exit into the ocean. The moment you do death seizes you.'¹¹

True giving is distinguished by marks of unselfishness, love and humility. Love and charity are necessary expressions of life. Life expands or shrinks in proportion to the ability to love and to give. The more one gives with the correct attitude of worshipfulness, the more one spontaneously feels a deep joy and satisfaction within.

The road to one's growth in the quality of giving is paved with the proper attitude of detachment. Detachment is a way of looking at things in their true perspective. It inspires us to give up the very things we feel we need the most. By practising detachment, we rise above the sense of possession and ownership. Actually the idea of ownership is the cause of all our troubles and miseries. There is nothing that belongs to us. Everything belongs to the Divine. We are only His caretakers. 'Your body is not your own,' says the Taoist thinker, 'it is the delegated image of God. Your life is not your own; it is the delegated harmony of God. Your individuality is not your own; it is the delegated adaptability of God.'

Swami Vivekananda encourages all to live these truths of Vedanta: 'Be bold, and

11. Ibid. vol. 2, p. 5.

face the Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease, or if you cannot, dream but truer dreams which are Eternal Love and Service Free.'

Let us continue to study Swami Vivekananda and put into practice his teachings in our daily lives. Let us try to pass on a

living example of those eternal Truths to the youth of today. Let the youth become inspired by these lofty ideals and let them make positive efforts to manifest the Divinity within themselves in this very life. Only then will they be qualified to be dedicated and wise leaders of our future society. □



*Group at 168 Brattle Street, Cambridge.
(left to right) Abbie E. Shapleigh, Amelia C. Thorp, Olea Bull Vaughn, Sara C. Bull*

Vivekananda's Concept of Individuality in the Context of Teamwork in Organizations

DR. RAMA PROSAD BANERJEE

In this paper, the author makes a penetrating study of Vivekananda's concept of individuality. He argues that, understanding the real nature of individuality places persons correctly in an organization, allowing them to play a better role in team situations. Realization of one's higher Self, which in fact implies transformation of one's ego-centric lower self, and thereby helping others to desire to achieve the same, is the real task before managers and leaders. One who can transcend the boundaries of his lower self and face the real test of true individuality is best fitted for civilization and participation in any organization. The author is an Associate Professor of Ethics & Finance and Head of the Department of Finance at the Institute of Finance and International Management, Bangalore.

Present-day Individuality

The word individual means undivided, and is generally used when referring to a person. Though most of us feel ourselves as a single unit, in the course of dealing with the world, however, we feel to have become two, as it were, through self-alienation. This is caused by the present world in which we operate, a world of highly centralized organizations. That external power of such organizations imposes, so to say, an additional self-identity, one more individuality on us. Thus in the very core of our being we get divided against ourselves. Modern technology has necessitated these highly centralized organization and, generally, people in and around them get lost in the technology—they forget their basic individuality.

With more and more centralization, people involved in the process gradually get mechanized. An individual turns into a machine, as it were. While the machines have contributed to our individual comforts and growth in some areas, at the same time they have, at the institutional level, led to the freedomless atomization of individuals. A person at the helm of a machine is identified no more as a person but by a mere number

or code. This 'number' in the assembly line works with a small part of the mass-produced machines. His or her task is to put one's share of the right kind of components into each machine being assembled as it comes on the conveyor belt. This repetitive job makes the person a new mono. He loses his *creative* faculties—which in fact are what characterize the original individuality—and is reduced to the likeness of a machine.

A man divided between his true individuality and the dominant one given by his environment (or a man with a weakened basic individuality and fragmented or multiple environment-imposed individualities) interacts like a circumscribed atomic element when in group situations. Continual routine work restricts his awareness and interests to the areas related mostly to his lower self, that is, his thwarted true Self. As a member of a team, his effectiveness at teamwork lacks many dimensions. If these missing dimensions are compensated for by other members of the team or the team-leader, only then can the team make a smooth run; otherwise teamwork fails.

A sense of futility brought about by a lack of fulfilment is the ongoing product of most of the modern organizations. Workers

and managers are equally plagued by these problems. Workers are becoming more and more disenchanted with the boring tasks set by conveyor belts and assembly lines. Managers and supervisors also have become bored by their repetitive work with inputs and outputs. As scientific knowledge grows and more technological breakthroughs accomplished, organizations too have to go through rapid readjustments in their method of management and set-ups. For, science and technology change the quality of the workers.

Let us take, for example, the printing technology. The first wooden typeset prepared by Panchanan Pal at Sreerampur, Hooghly, functioned only in proportion to the literary output or capacity of the pressman. The pressman himself was the creator of his literary art, and he produced it in a printed format. Thus art and craft coexisted in the individual as his inseparable dimensions. Gradually that typeset gave way to the modern hand-press with lead types, reducing the type-setter to a mere pressman—with the craft, but without the creative art. He cared not for the content of the text, but for the letters only—involvement of the worker, though reduced, remained to a certain extent. However, the latest printing technology *detaches* the worker from the craft. The computerized composition and offset printing methods do not *involve* the pressman. He has to simply work a button to turn out printed material in thousands, millions. Thus the involvement now of the man behind the machine is minimum and has led to his atomization.

True, an evidently *single* personality has an inherent two-ness. That is, a two-ness in which the higher self and the lower (or environment-demanded) self are in a dynamic tension is natural to human life. But the constant dominance of the latter is bad, for, it causes atomization. With the atomization of the individual, his family, social as well as corporate life are weakened. Without

originality, the atomized man eventually becomes inept in handling situations that arise in a group-context, and the group to which he belongs can no longer function as a cohesive body.

Role of Science and Industrialization

In the pre-industrial era, custom and status were mostly responsible for maintaining the stability of social organizations. Family and caste-class credentials were dominant in determining the status of a person. But now, pursuit of wealth has become the main-spring of human activity and organization. Science has propagated the idea that the world of the senses alone is real, that a human being and the universe are real to the extent the sense organs present them. It is not the heart but the intellect that tastes, analyses and certifies the world. 'Matter is a mass of molecules, life a movement of mechanical forces; human psyche a bundle of conditioned responses, a few complexes and glands; values are what society makes them at different times and places. Religion is an escape, and death draws a veil over the whole drama.'¹

The tension between a person's higher self (the seat of his true individuality) and his lower self (or individuality imposed by the external world) is positive, creative, self-transcending and capable of growth so long as the higher self is dominant. But it is negative, destructive, self-limiting and dull if the lower self dominates. Now, industrialization has not only brought about atomization by fostering the lower self, as we have said, but it has also brought centralization. That means, the individual at the centre is glorified whereas those at the periphery are atomized. Thus the glorified central figure is a symbol of individualism. This further effects the negative tension of the workers,

1. Kewal Motwani, *Sociological Papers and Essays—An Asian Sociologist's Treatment*, Ganesh & Co. Pvt. Ltd. (Madras), 1957.

who, unable to free their true individuality, try in course of time to imitate the central individualism. For, be it the central individualism or the marginalized workers' individuality, what is common is the human creative urge, which cannot remain suppressed indefinitely. This is an unexpected and undesirable byproduct of centralization. The long practice of centralization has made individualism the key to personal, so-

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cial and global life. This individualism, however, implies denial of any authority without. Only the authority of the lower self shapes this individualism. Man refuses to recognize any authority beyond the human. Individual perception and reason stands as the only means of acquiring knowledge and judging.

The moderns in general cannot conceive of any science other than that of things that can be measured, counted and weighted, which really comes to the same as saying material things, since it is to these only that the quantitative point of view can be applied; and the claim to reduce quality to quantity is very typical of modern science.²

Centralization, as a phenomenon of modern technology, shapes the forms of or-

ganizations also. Line, staff and management come into conflict. It is the sense of the measurement-oriented and objective individuality that kindles conflict between line, staff and management functions. But in the case of an organization that is working as a team, it is the real or true sense of individuality that helps harmonize the one-ness of a person's own power with the broader power encompassing all the individual powers. A sense of vastness enables the team-individuals sacrifice, cross their own little boundaries. Regarding the sense of vastness, Pathak writes: 'It will thwart us where we are small, where we are against the current of things; but it will help us where we are great, where we are in union with us all.'³ The dominance of lowness in members has a negative impact on the growth and development of teamwork. It results in deviousness, envy, jealousy and greed in the group. Propelled by the motive of gains for the lower individuality or individualism, managers and workmen tend to forget their real being, their true identity.

One knows oneself to be a brother, friend and father in one's response to one's brother, friend and son, respectively. A mother is born when a child is born. A wife is born when a husband is born.... What constitutes the personality of a woman? Nothing but the sum total of these social relationships and ultimate responses. This is what we have called our lower personality.⁴

It is this lower personality that is at the root of modern evils, particularly in relation to teamwork in organizations and society.

2. Rene' Guenon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, tran. Arthur Osborne (London: Luzac & Co., 1942), pp. 121-2.

3. Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana* (MacMillan India Ltd., 1988), p. 51.

4. Mahambrata Brahmachari, *Vaisnava Vedanta* [Calcutta: Das Gupta & Co. (P) Ltd., 1940], p. 124.

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Individuality and Diversity

Modern sociologists give a picture of this rational individuality or personality. Kinball Young's⁵ theory picturizes a rational person thus, integrating his biological, social and cultural variables. If *O* is the organism, *S* the society or social interaction effects on it, *C* its culture, and *P* the personality, then the interplay of *O*, *S*, *C* gives rise to *P*:

$$P = O S C$$

This theory suffers the same drawback in that the organism has to transcend its

two species, no two cultures and, consequently, no two persons can ever be identical.

So, contrary to the prevalent organizational or teamwork policies, which ignore diversity and enforce similarity of behaviour on labourers, the force of variety, intrinsic to humanity, rebels. Ultimately, discords arise within the team and take the shape of conflicts. This sort of conflict sometimes breaks the team. 'When conflict breaks out in a company, it is a conflict of personalities. There is only one form of conflict that is institutionalized, and that is the labour/management conflict; all others are seen as originating from the personalities of individuals.'⁷ However, if any individual is set apart from human association or com-

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lower personality and become a transcendental personality. For, after all, behaviour of individuals in a team is determined by their character or personality. Kattsoff's formula⁶ for behaviour also confirms that conclusion:

$$B = G C E$$

where, *B* is behaviour, *G* the goal of the organism, *C* its capacity, and *E* its environment. These two formulae show that the variates *O*, *S*, *C* and *G*, *C*, *E* are infinitely variable. This means, no two organisms, no

pany and allowed to maintain a solitary life, he cannot function. 'A solitary individual, wholly independent of others, is largely a fiction. In reality, most or even all living beings exist in more or less integrated communities, and the ability to maintain these associations entails some cooperation, or at least proto-cooperation.'⁸

The dilemma that arises concerning an individual either left to himself or put in a group situation is of fundamental importance to an organization. An individual is the key unit of an organization. For, ulti-

5. Kinball Young, *Personality and Problems of Adjustment*, Crafts & Co., New York, 1940, p. 124.

6. L.O. Kattsoff, *The Design of Human Behaviour* (St. Louis: Educational Publishers, 1953), p. 28.

7. Albert Low, *Zen and Creative Management* (Playboy Paperbacks, 1976), p. 61.

8. Theodeseus Dobzhansky, *Genetics and the Origin of Species*, 3rd edn. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), pp. 78-9.

mately its success or conflicts have their roots in the individual's working and interacting. More sophisticated the means of production, greater the need for control of individuals, and hence greater the need to focus on individuals. But, considering the unsuitability of the old ideas of management and view of individuality, it is useful to study Vivekananda, who has thrown a new light on the idea of individuality. Vivekananda's idea is of utmost relevance to business and industry, as well as to people of all sections in society. Vivekananda sees the material or sensual selfhood of an individual as a non-entity in the ultimate analysis, and declares that there is a deeper and higher selfhood

fulfilling the needs of her baby. She becomes totally concerned with the baby, barely leaving any of her faculties to respond to calls from outside. The apparent individuality of the mother gets diluted, effaced, so to say, for the time being. She forgets the selfish calls of her senses. On the other hand, people in other situations struggle hard to serve their lower individuality. That the higher individuality, or the real Man, manifests to the extent the apparent is subordinated, and that it is spiritual becomes clear on observing extreme cases of self-effacement or destruction of the lower self—cases of all spiritual leaders. Instead of bringing about total self-destruction as commonly understood, it

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which alone is basic and real—thus reawakening the atomized individual to its inherently free and creative source. We will now discuss this theme of Vivekananda in the following section.

Man—The Real and The Apparent

The ordinary rational mind as well as all human activities are anchored in what could be termed apparent individuality. Vivekananda makes a clear distinction between apparent and real individuality. Characterizing them, he says: 'There are two opposite tendencies: one is the protection of the individuality, the other is the intense desire to sacrifice the individuality.'⁹ The kind of individuality which we like to protect is the lower, the apparent. Consider any mother. She is ready to sacrifice her all for

made them powerful world-movers! As Vivekananda has explained:

What is the individuality of man? Not Tom Brown, but God in man. That is the [true] individuality. The more man has approached that, the more he has given up his false individuality. The more he tries to collect and gain everything [for himself], the less he is an individual. The less he has thought of [himself], the more he has sacrificed all individuality during his lifetime,...the more he is an individual.¹⁰

Generally speaking, the world has practically forgotten the above theme, and commercialism has become the phenomenon of modern society as a result of interaction among apparent men. Commercial interest has entered everywhere—the state, the society, and the family. The utilitarian, materially efficient, and productive man

9. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, Mayavati Memorial Edition (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 2, p. 467. [Hereafter CW.]

10. CW, pp. 467–8.

survives and rules today's scenario. Even in the area of knowledge, science, art, poetry and religion, the commercial factor overrides all others. The apparent man depreciates the value of the beautiful and the sublime, and overstresses the value of the useful. The apparent man needs to be put in his place. Sri Aurobindo has said, 'The end of commercialism can only come about either by some unexpected development of commercialism itself or through a reawakening of spirituality in the race and its coming to its own by the subordination of the political and economic motives of life to the spiritual motive.'¹¹

We must realize that it is man's true individuality that imparts validity and reality to his empirical or apparent individuality. Each person has to grow to perceive the greatness within himself. The scientific materialistic mind should find ways to have a feel of the divinity within itself. This inward journey is the only means to subordinate and transform human motives and the ordinary ego. Vivekananda says:

We must first understand what is meant by individuality. It is attaining the ideal.... You will change all the time. Can you stop? Do you want to keep your minds as they are now--the angers, hatreds, jealousies, quarrels, all the thousand and one things in the mind? Do you mean to say that you will keep them?... You cannot stop anywhere ...until perfect conquest has been achieved, until you are pure and you are perfect. You have no more anger when you are all love, bliss, infinite existence.... You cannot stop anywhere until you come to life that never ends. Infinite life!...the idea that you are Mr. So-and-so can never be true; it is a day-dream. Know this and be free. ...I am neither the body, nor the

organs, nor am I the mind; I am Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss absolute; I am He.... Where is knowledge for me, for I am knowledge itself!... I am sure I live, for I am life, the One Being, and nothing exists except through me, and in me, and as me. I am manifested through the elements, but I am the free One.'¹²

This is the highest state of the real man. He is *one* in all situations, a *sthita-prajña*, a sage of settled wisdom. The *Gītā* says:¹³

*Duḥkheṣu anudvignamanāḥ
sukheṣu vigatasprṛhaḥ;
Vitarāga-bhaya-krodhaḥ
sthitadhīr-munir-ucyate.*

He whose mind is undisturbed in the midst of sorrows and has no craving for pleasures, and from whom attraction, fear and anger have departed—such a one is called a sage of settled wisdom.

The real man feels the presence of his higher self and develops a desire to realize it fully. The apparent man is, on the other hand, in a constant flux and inconsistent, swayed by his circumstance-determined body-bound identity. His aim to fulfil desires gets him lost in worldly sorrows and sufferings. To a *sthitaprajña*, however, the situation is the other way round, as Vivekananda says,

If it is happiness to enjoy the consciousness of this small body, it must be greater happiness to enjoy the consciousness of two bodies, the measure of happiness increasing with the consciousness of an increasing number of bodies, the aim, the ultimate of happiness being reached when it would become a univer-

11. Sri Aurobindo, Birth Centenary Library (Pondicherry: Aurobindo Ashram), vol. 15, p. 466.

12. CW, vol. 2, pp. 468, 462.

13. *Bhagavad-Gita*, tran. S.K. Chakraborty, verse II.56. [Hereafter *Gita*.]

sal consciousness.¹⁴

The scientific-rational individuality is, in the view of Vivekananda, a miserable little prison-individuality. To gain the infinite universal individuality, the miserable little prison-individuality must go. Physical individuality is a delusion.

The Vedantic View of Man

In this regard, since Vivekananda's views are derived from the teachings of the Upanishads, therefore let us see what they have to say. The Upanishads have called the real man the son of the Immortal. But the mortal apparent man has two aspects—the visible and the invisible, the man without and the man within. The visible man is considered the real man from the scientific-rational viewpoint—the form, head, eyes, ears, face, hands and feet and other organs,

acts as his link with the organs. But the real man, the real individual is behind all these. Vivekananda says 'There is only one individual and it is infinite.'¹⁵

Externally observed, every person is constantly changing. Internally, with respect to the mind, as a child a person thought in one way; as a man he thought differently; and, in future, when old, he will think yet differently. So where lies his individuality? Surely, neither in the body, nor in the mind, nor in the field of thoughts. Individuality, says Vedanta, is in the divine core, the Atman, of human beings.

Individuality is that which changes not—is beyond all things, changeless. It would be tremendously dangerous for this state to remain in eternity, because then the thief would always remain a thief and the blackguard a blackguard. If

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and all their activities that are seen from the outside make the visible man. Within this man there is another called the inner man, who thinks, conceives, dreams, etc. The inner man looks across the space and time barrier. He wants to know many things about the world and about himself—what is the fate of the universe and his own, where does man go after the dissolution of the body and so on. The apparent man is the combined product of this outer and inner man. There exists a concrete relationship between his external and internal aspects. The external sense organs are not his immediate instruments, rather the mind is, which

a baby died, he would have to remain a baby. The real individuality is that which never changes and will never change; and that is the God within us.¹⁶

Man must recognize this divine individuality within. Then he will understand that he is basically free and divine. So are all others. Then can every action be a form of worship. With this notion should man cultivate his higher individuality and freedom.

True Individuality and Teamwork

As opposed to this position, we can see all around the consequences of responding

14. CW, vol. 1, p. 14.

15. CW, vol. 3, p. 347.

16. CW, vol. 5, p. 286.

to life on the strength of the body-mind lower individuality. It has led people away from true freedom, towards self-limitation and excessive self-attention. It has filled man with the sense of rights and privileges, but not so much with the sense of duty. And a rights-conscious man has a perverse interpretation of freedom—as meaning *his* freedom to satisfy *his* wants and meets *his* goals, even at the cost of others. Here then is the essence of the situation as Vedanta judges it: a conflict of urges—of a person's higher self with that of his lower self and of other selves; or a conflict of duty towards oneself with the concurrent duty towards others.

Ancient Indian wisdom has contrib-

conscious members. Rights-consciousness inevitably turns into an ego-propelled mentality. In the words of Vivekananda, 'Charity never faileth; devotion to an ideal never fails in sympathy, never becomes weary of sympathizing with others. Love to enemies is not possible for ordinary men: they drive out others in order to live themselves. Only a very few men lived in the world who practised both. King Janaka was one of them.'¹⁸

Vivekananda's reference to King Janaka reminds us of the character of Janaka—he was a great philosopher-king, *rājarshi* (*rājā* + *rishi*), meaning a king who is at the same time a sage. Such a person is an

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uted much to the solution of this problem in man in the context of a group or a team. The gist of the solution is this: It is not with respect to *others* that every person must do his duty. Rather, if every person pursues his own duty with a sense of morality, there develops within him a dimension that places him at the right point of the wheel of a group. This group becomes duty-bound, as it were, and gradually identifies each member's role in the context of a divine design. Vivekananda says, 'You should cultivate a noble nature by doing your duty. By doing our duty we get rid of the idea of duty; and then and then only we feel everything as done by God.'¹⁷

This way the conflict of duties is constructively reconciled. The duty-conscious member of a team is better than the rights-

ideal leader. Placed at the head of a team, a leader like Janaka can bring only good to the people in and around his group. The turbulent members of a group, who often jeopardize the group's social causes, get readily tamed by the efforts of a *rājarshi*. The observation of Prof. S.K. Chakraborty is worth mentioning in this context:

The excerpts from Vivekananda and Bhishma on leadership qualities are all positively value-oriented and not skill-dominated. Duty-orientation, with the underpinning of self-restraint and self-sacrifice, is decidedly the keynote. Democratic liberalism defined in terms of rights-orientation is a vain inspiration. As for team or group members, the message is that it is too easy to exercise the right to question the others—particularly of the leader....¹⁹

17. CW, vol. 6, p. 118.

18. CW, vol. 6, p. 121.

19. *Gita*, p. 256.

Swami Vivekananda's Views

Vivekananda's solution to the restricted form of individuality and related question is Vedanta. First he places the individual in the context of a universal purpose.

Individuality in universality is the plan of creation. Each cell has its part in bringing about consciousness. Man is individual and at the same time universal. It is while realizing our individual nature that we realize even our national and universal nature. Each is an infinite circle whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere.²⁰

Next, since at the centre current problems is the self-serving tendency of the wanting-man, Vivekananda replaces the wanting-tendency by the giving-tendency. The giving concept, needless to argue, is purer and healthier. Hence he urges:

In the world take always the position of the giver. Give everything and look for no return. Give love, give help, give service, give any little thing you can, but *keep out barter*. Make no conditions, and none will be imposed. Let us give out of our own bounty, just as God gives to us.²¹

In the context of teams and groups in organizations, we are eager about our dues, rights and what not, but are hardly concerned about what to give in return. Now we must prepare our own list of giving. We must understand, as the Vedantic teachers say, that we are in debt already and we must consciously endeavour to settle those debts. They remind us of our debt to the gods, the debt to the sages, debt to our parents, debt to humanity, and debt to other beings. Our debt to the gods can be discharged through prayers etc. Our treasure of knowledge, lan-

guages, and sciences are the contributions of the wise sages, which should be repaid through study and practice. The debt to our parents can be repaid by serving them. Our debt to humanity can be squared up through humble charity, and our debt to the other beings can be discharged by appropriately caring for them. The awareness of these debts clearly defines our position—how much in debt we are! How can man demand anything more as a right? Therefore, says Swami Vivekananda, be a giving man; know and work on how much and to what extent you can give.

So, we must give up our smallness, pettiness, 'I'-ness, to regain our true individuality.

There is no real individuality of the Jiva (separate soul); eventually it, as a compound, will go to pieces. Only that which is beyond further analysis is 'simple', and that alone is truth, freedom, immortality, bliss. All struggles for the preservation of this illusive individuality are really vices. All struggles to lose this individuality are virtues. Everything in the universe is trying to break down this individuality, either consciously or unconsciously. All morality is based upon the destruction of separateness or false individuality, because that is the cause of all sin.²²

Thus we can expect better work situations, balanced between high skill and high values, provided our perception of our true self, our individuality, changes from the wanting type to the giving type.

Therefore, the concept of individuality in Swami Vivekananda is not only a personal religious subject, but it is also relevant to better social interactions and better managed organization and teamwork. □

20. CW, vol. 6, p. 121.

21. CW, vol. 7, p. 5.

22. CW, vol. 7, p. 58.

Swami Vivekananda and His Views

HARDAT SINGH

Mr. Singh, of Ontario, presents an overview of the impact of Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions and the clear directions which Swamiji has left for the upliftment of humankind.

The Ramakrishna Mission highlight came out of the dynamic personality of Swami Vivekananda while attending the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 in Chicago. He was reechoing the wisdom of his beloved Master, Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Vivekananda had always claimed to be only a servant of his Master. He once commented, 'I have read about Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, and about all those luminaries of ancient times. I read how they would stand up and say, 'Be thou whole', and the man became whole. I now found it was true. When I myself saw this man, all skepticism was brushed aside. From him I learned that religion can be given and taken more tangibly than anything else in the world. Be therefore spiritual first. Have something to give and then stand up before the world and give it.'

Religion, Swami Vivekananda said, 'is not talk or doctrines or theories; nor is it sectarian. Religion cannot live in sects and societies. It is the relation between the Atman and the Paramatman.' He further said, 'Religion does not consist in erecting temples or buildings, churches, or attending public worship. It is not to be found in books or in words or in lectures or in organizations.' He concludes and says, 'Nothing will satisfy us until we know the truth for ourselves.'

Not India alone but the entire world has been enriched by such profound knowledge and renewed spiritual discovery. Sri

Ramakrishna lived an egoless life of pure thinking and simple living. He was devoid of any worldly desire for he knew that the fall of mankind was, due to people blindly running after the illusions of the world. His supreme knowledge took him to the state where he mastered reason and intuition, and came face to face with Truth itself. Sri Ramakrishna's incarnation has brought a special divine light to the whole of humanity. Once he was asked by a disciple about the source of his seemingly inexhaustible knowledge. He replied, 'I have not read, but I have heard and remember.' He then went on to verify that knowledge by his own direct spiritual experience. His was the Divine personality. He realized his identity with the Christ, Mahakali, Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Hunuman, Sri Sri Radha, the Prophet Mohammed, and the Impersonal Brahman. Such a profound depth of experience is unique.

Swami Vivekananda, in his maiden speech at the Parliament of Religions, was like fresh air to the Western audience. Unknown to them, his very appearance, bearing, voice and profound utterances entered deep into the very depths of his hearers' hearts. Such a combination of physical and intellectual qualities made people feel that this foreign spiritual dignitary was a world teacher.

His presence in the Western societies had a lasting effect upon the people. After hearing him they felt that here was a religion

that was universal, based upon fundamental principles of knowledge and discipline. This won for India, and especially the Ramakrishna Movement, the esteem and respect of the American people. The Western people had been exposed to the Christian viewpoint, which embraced the idea that one could be saved simply by blind belief, without the desired disciplines which Christ preached and practised.

The Vedantic view of Swami Vivekananda was like a thunderbolt. It gave life a profound meaning. If there was a God, He must be directly experienced by each and every person. Swamiji emphasized that God could be directly realized within one's own heart. Such realization was the birth-right of every human being. From the sessions at the Parliament of Religions the Vedanta Philosophy was broadcast to the world. Thus the ground work was laid and a path was paved for a renewal in the religious affairs of mankind. The time was ripe, for, the majority of people were dissatisfied with the then pre-vailing dogmas of religion. Swami Vivekananda became the architect for the spiritual revival in the world—eastern as well as western..

Swami Vivekananda said that he was proud to belong to a religion that had taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. He belonged to a nation which had sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions from all nations of the world. He clarified that, 'As the different streams have their sources in different places but all mingle their water in the ocean, so O Lord, the different paths which men take through dif-

ferent tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.'

Swamiji said, however much we may hear, however much we may argue, nothing will satisfy us but our own realization. Such realization is possible for each one of us if we will only try. Swamiji was not just a preacher or teacher of words, but his life was an example of all his utterances. Anyone who wishes to ascend the stairs of spirituality should cast one's life in his mould. Roman Rolland in his book, *The Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, said that 'a true Hindu believes in nothing that he has not realized'.

These universal principles were revitalized by Sri Ramakrishna and expounded by Swami Vivekananda. He emphasized that the individual soul after its rise to the state of perfection, merges in the Divine Consciousness, where individuality ceases as well as birth and death. The fundamental principle of Vedanta says: 'There is One spirit, One existence, One life and One Being in the universe. The idea of separateness is unreal, for, the underlying reality is the Absolute Being which is one without a second.' The ethics of Vedanta philosophy is based upon the attainment of God consciousness. The more one studies the utterances of Swami Vivekananda, the more one will find solutions to the human problems of in the present age. Swami Vivekananda would often say, 'Helping others physically by removing their physical needs is indeed great, but spiritual knowledge is the only thing that can destroy our miseries forever.' □

I recommend you to take care of the minutes; for hours will take care of themselves.

—Earl of Chesterfield

Respected Swami,

I feel humble and highly honoured for being asked to write a letter giving my personal reflections upon the centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission and Swami Vivekananda's contribution to the world.

It is not an easy task to write about the enormous contributions Swamiji made to the world's spiritual thoughts, philosophy and ideals of mankind. Some one like me who has spent two-thirds of his life abroad can only see and judge things from the 'outside', in contrast to someone who spent almost his whole life in the Indian environment. Swami Vivekananda's message to the West (also to the world) was none other than that of his guru Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva, which was essentially the universal message of Vedanta. Regarding Swami Vivekananda's visit to the West, Sri Aurobindo said, 'The going forth of Vivekananda, marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India is awake not only to survive but to conquer. The visit of Swami Vivekananda to America and the subsequent work of those who followed him did more for India than a hundred London Congresses could effect.'

The moment Swami Vivekananda uttered the words 'Sisters and Brothers of America' on 11 September 1893, at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, the image of India as being a country inhabited by backward, superstitious and illiterate people was changed for ever. His quotation from the scriptures at the Parliament of Religions, 'As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee', shattered the myth and belief that there is 'One Lord and One Path', which was the main doctrine of Christianity and Islam. The image of India presented in Europe and America about 100–150 years ago by the missionaries and foreign visitors was as a backward country with a past civilization, which had nothing to contribute to the world. The Hindus, or in Swami Vivekananda's words, Vedantins, of India were initially under an onslaught by Islam and then by Christianity, spreading their monotheism and condemning the polytheism practised by the Hindus. The Hindus were helpless under the alien rule, and were getting converted in large numbers to the foreign conquerors' religions, especially those in the so-called educated class who were government employees and also the poorest and the untouchables. That was a time which can be referred to as the dark age of Indian history, when Hindus were very superstitious and under the domination of the priestly class.

In this darkest hour of the Indian civilization, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa rekindled the light of salvation for Hinduism, or Sanatana Dharma (Eternal Truth), as Sri Ramakrishna called it, by bringing out the universal truth of Vedanta (Hinduism). Swami Vivekananda appeared at this critical time of India's history, when Hinduism was in turmoil. He truly saved Hinduism from further decay. He spread the message of his guru, 'One Lord but Many Paths'. He declared that there is no polytheism in India. He challenged the Christians: 'Why do you go to a church? Why is the Cross holy? Why are there so many images in the Catholic churches? My brethren, we can no more think about anything

without a mental image than we can live without breathing.' Swamiji's speech at the Parliament of Religions stirred the inner core of one and all, because he spoke the fundamental truth of all religions. No wonder his teachings of Vedanta have struck roots in the Western culture since he first brought it to the West.

It is not proper for me to delve into this, as a large volume of literature is available on this subject. But it is my belief that although Swami Vivekananda's advent at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago may appear to have been a small wave on an ocean, it has already become a large wave within 100 years. In another century his impact will be felt in every corner of the earth. I see a great future for the Ramakrishna Mission, which was started by Swami Vivekananda in 1897.

When one considers the status of Buddhism, Christianity or Islam 100 years after their beginning, the message of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa has travelled far and wide within a very short time. It is true that information did not travel very far 1000 years ago, and it took a long time to transmit a message across the oceans. Still, I justify my assessment from my personal contacts with many Ramakrishna Order monks. Their sincerity, devotion to their objectives ('Service to God through Service to Mankind'), laid down by Swami Vivekananda himself, strictly following the ideals, and service to all who come in contact with them will propagate the work of Swami Vivekananda. The liberal minded people in the West and the intelligentsia are no longer satisfied with book-knowledge. These people are asking for the 'real things', which can only be experienced and not learned from books or literature. Swami Vivekananda insisted that religion is realization; it is not believing but being and becoming. We are to become Divine by realizing the Divine. Idols or temples or churches or books are only supports.

Ramakrishna Mission abroad are growing slowly but steadily. For example, a Swami Vivekananda Centennial Hall was opened recently at the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco, and the function was attended by a few hundred devotees. One of the nicest Ramakrishna temples has been built in the retreat property of the Vedanta Society of Western Washington, Seattle, Wa., only about 3 years ago. There are now twelve Ramakrishna Vedanta Centers in the U.S.A., and one in Canada, located in the city of Toronto on a beautiful piece of property. No doubt, many other religious groups and sects have come abroad to preach the message of Vedanta. Still, some of them also speak eloquently about Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, emphasizing that Swami Vivekananda was the first who brought Vedanta to the West. People follow different Vedantic religious groups according to their inclinations and aptitudes. Though majority of people in the West are affluent, nevertheless, after one has enjoyed material prosperity, questions arise: What next? How to make life meaningful? How to cope with life's problems and difficulties? Vedanta brings a message of hope, and gives guidelines for a meaningful existence, peace and fulfilment.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Asoke C.D. Chakiader
(Professor Emeritus)
The University of British Columbia
Canada

Swami Vivekananda and We the Non-Resident Hindus

We are non-resident Hindus who left Hindusthan in the 19th century, to slog and sweep in the sugar-cane fields, coal mines and diamond mines, and as traders (free migrants) in south Africa, Zanzibar, Fiji, Mozambique and several parts of Africa.. I was born in Fiji, but my parents were born in Navsari, Gujarat, India. We are now settled in New Zealand. We have reason to believe that Swami Vivekananda was a Saint cast in a different and special mould. He was a patriot, though a saint. He was a nationalist, though a lover of and believer in the goodness of humanity. He was a saint who had his finger on the pulse of the people.

Swami Vivekananda's flaming and fiery message has gone deep into the heart of every non-resident Hindu. A band of friends in the U.K., living thousands of miles away from their mother country, have taken up in right earnest the message of Swami Vivekananda. They are spreading the inspiring message of this intrepid Swami by 'karma' and 'jnana' (action and literature). It was in 1893 that Swami Vivekananda gave his famous extempore speech at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Since then this hitherto-unknown Swami has gripped the heart and mind of every thinking Hindu.

I was influenced by the speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda in my student days in New Zealand. The Ramakrishna Mission, which he founded on 1 May 1897, has by its service and integrity endeared itself even to the politicians and people in all walks of life.

One hundred years since Swamiji first returned to India after preaching Hinduism in the West, the bugle call of Dynamic Hinduism (or, as Sister Nivedita so originally styled it, 'Aggressive Hinduism') still rings in our ears. No saint inspired young men so much as did Swami Vivekananda to strive for India's independence, as a result of which so many of them willingly and cheerfully mounted the scaffold to die for their country with the ringing cry '*Vande Mataram*' on their lips. Few know that many revolutionaries were ardent students of Swamiji's writings and utterances, which were like a second *Gita* for them.

It was he who had said, 'First bread, then religion'. He had also predicted the rise of Labour in Russia or China, long before the Communists captured power in these two countries. Saints are normally ignorant of many of the problems faced by lay people, but Swami Vivekananda understood them, offered solutions, and even praised the role of family-people in upholding religion.

However, let me be honest and state that, of late the news from India and the many scandals and scams that have been hitting the headlines have made the non-resident Hindus frustrated with the politicians at home. The non-resident Indians, busy in their lives abroad, are now being taunted and teased by the original residents of the country. It is high time that the message of Swami Vivekananda is spread among the politicians also. Swamiji was dead-set against dishonesty; he wanted his *gurubhais* (brother disciples) to be faithful in their accounts and be honest in their dealings. No jugglery of figures, no misappropriation of funds.

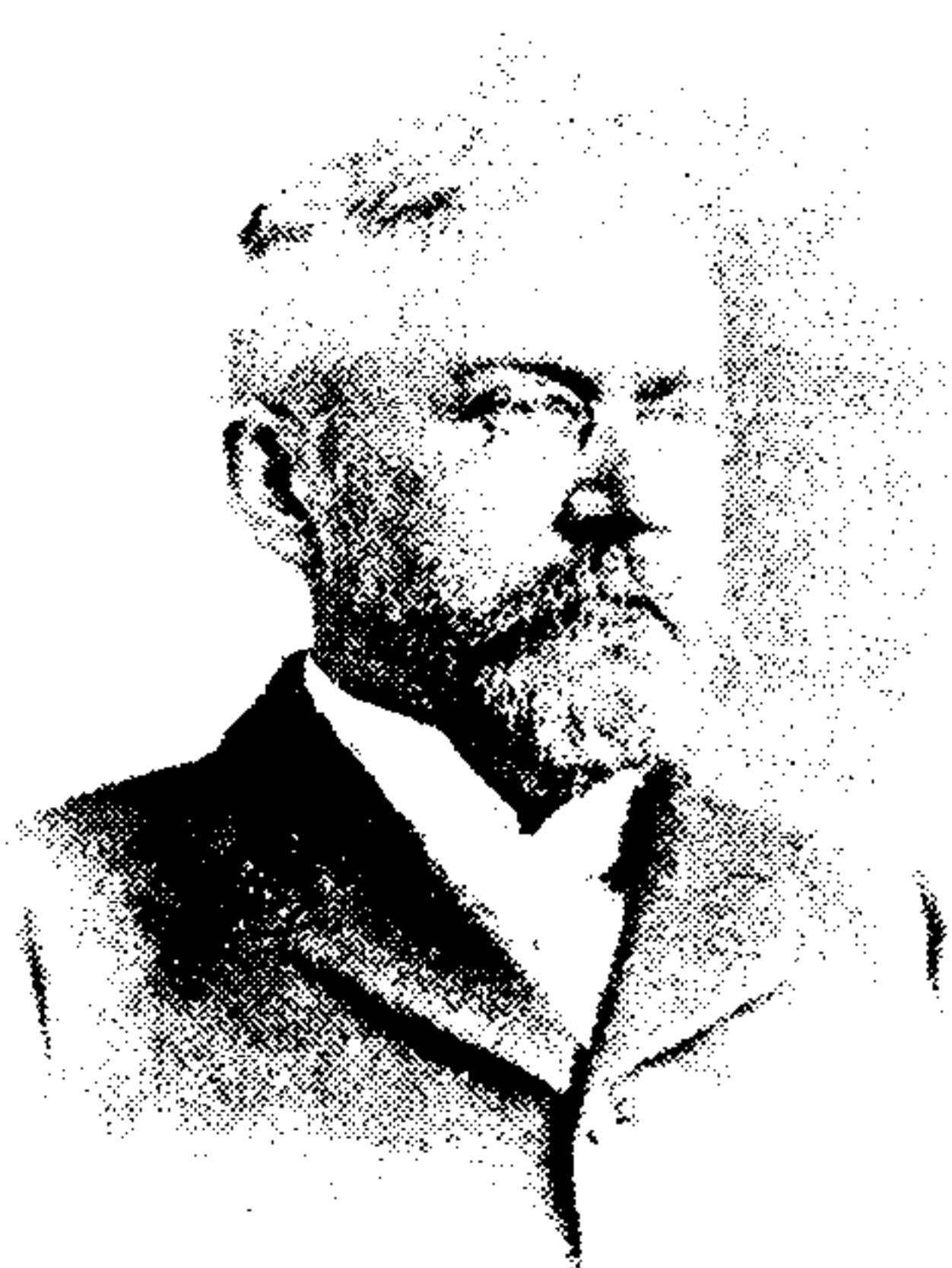
The message of Swami Vivekananda is not reaching all. It has to be broadcast from the towers. It must ring a hundred-fold more strongly so that even the deaf will hear it. If the

Hindus at home are strong, we shall be respected outside. If the Hindus at home are dishonest to the teachings and ideology of Swami Vivekananda, we shall be treated as dirt in the outside world.

Whilst millions of dollars are being pumped into India by various Christian Churches to save the heathen Hindu souls for Christ, a Christian country like New Zealand (God-Zone) has the highest youth suicide rate in the western world (according to a recent United Nations report).

It is my aim to acquaint Hindus and Non-Hindus alike in the Oceania region to the sublime Ramakrishna-Vivekananda-Vedanta literature so that they have an enlightened future.

Harish Kumar Hari
Auckland, New Zealand



Prof. Wright



Dr. Lewis G. Jones

What the Ramakrishna Mission Means to Me

MRS. ILSE BUSCH

Mrs. Busch, an active participant in the Ramakrishna Mission's work in Germany, has presented an inspiring article on how she came in touch with the Mission and the influence it has had on her life.

Prior to Swami Vivekananda's return to India after his first trip to America, he visited several places in Europe, one of these being Germany. It was during that tour that Swamiji met Dr. Paul Deussen, the renowned philosopher and translator of the Upanishads from their original Sanskrit. In memory of Swamiji's visit to Germany, the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre of Bidweide was consecrated in September of 1996.

It is really marvellous how the swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission during the last 100 years have been able to spread Sri Ramakrishna's message around the world. There are now many countries in which Vedantic literature or Vedanta groups are found. Even the former communist countries like the Soviet Union and Bulgaria have an eagerness to know more about this undogmatic message.

Background Influences

For a clearer understanding of how I came in contact with the Ramakrishna Mission, I will give a short sketch of my background. I was born in a Protestant family in the north-east part of Germany which now belongs to Russia. My mother never doubted the truths of the Protestant faith. My father was a member of an esoteric group which was banished by the Nazis.

The atmosphere around our village was like paradise. It was very peaceful. The doors were kept unlocked because there were not any robbers. The children had no

reason to have fear. Yet, within myself, from my early youth, I was troubled by spiritual doubts. Within I thought, if there was a God who was omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient, how could He have created these questions regarding heaven, hell, and the devil? Then I also wondered, how could people quarrel about the 'best' God if He were almighty? However, my biggest problem was, how could I possibly become like an angel in this short lifetime?

As I grew, I liked the teachings of Christ wholeheartedly, but I could not find any practical application of his ideals for married couples. After the Second World War, I came to Berlin as a fugitive. After some years, I began social pedagogical studies. I liked my job and was for 30 years fully occupied with it.

The post-war years were a very confused period in Germany. Most people were seeking material success. The lack of success of the German Wirtschaftswunder could be seen in the inner emptiness of the people, and it culminated in the failure of all social, medical, psychological and religious efforts to alleviate the situation.

It was a dark period in Germany for me until 1964, when accidentally in the public library I found two books by Romain Rolland. One was the *Life of Ramakrishna* and the second was *Vivekananda*. I have no words to describe the immense spiritual force in them which overwhelmed my whole being. While

reading these wonderful books, tears ran and ran and washed away all my spiritual doubts. There was a God. There was no need to fight over the best God. All approaches were good and would lead to the same goal. Now there was a hope for mankind. There was no heaven or hell outside for the ultimate destination of the soul. There was a possibility for each person to have an inner experience of the ultimate truth within himself, according to his own understanding and choice. There was not an unintelligible Genesis but a variety of paths open to all to realize directly and clearly the One Eternal Truth.

The inner longing was now awakened and a search for more spiritual books began. I found ten books on the life and sayings of Sri Ramakrishna. Now I have more than twenty. The book by the Evangelistic Pastor,

It was a dark period in Germany for me until 1964, when accidentally in the public library I found two books by Romain Rolland. One was the Life of Ramakrishna and the second was Vivekananda. I have no words to describe the immense spiritual force in them which overwhelmed my whole being. While reading these wonderful books, tears ran and ran and washed away all my spiritual doubts.

Dr. Carl Vogl, was my first book of the ten. It is titled, *Sri Ramakrishna the Last Indian Prophet*, and printed in 1921. His second book titled, *Sri Ramakrishna a Prophet of the Awakening India*, came out in 1927. Reading these and other books, it was clear to me that I needed a guru for further help. But it was not easy to find a competent guru in my country. I was reassured that when the seeker was ready, the needed help would come. With faith in those words, under my present circumstances, I worked out a daily routine of sadhana with the information

gathered from the books. Now I feel that the time spent during those years was fruitful.

Finally, in 1976, my opportunity came. I visited the Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna in Gretz, France and met Swami Ritajananda. I was graciously initiated by him in 1978. Although his lectures were given in French, a language I did not clearly understand, he was a helpful spiritual guide for me. One day, just after his lecture, he asked me, 'Can you understand?' I could only answer, 'I try to listen with my heart.' He smiled. Gretz was not only a wonderful meeting place for the European devotees but also for those from America and other foreign countries. I felt myself more and more to be a part of a world-wide Vedanta family.

Although all this was deeply gratifying to me, I felt a constant sorrow within regarding the spiritual situation in Berlin. I asked Swami Ritajananda to hold lectures and seminars there. Due to his age and physical weakness, he could not oblige. What to do? Finally I learned that a swami of the Ramakrishna Order came every year to Holland for Vedanta lectures and seminars. Perhaps the swami would agree to journey from Amsterdam, Holland, to Berlin. In February 1979, I was able to visit India and tried to meet 'the swami who goes to Holland'. Unfortunately I was unable to meet that Swami Ranganathananda who regularly visited Holland. Finally contact was made and, in July of 1980, Swami Ranganathananda visited Berlin. It was a great event for Germany. On the two days fixed for his lectures, the hall was filled to overflowing. Many interested friends came to meet him at my home in the evenings after the lectures. For hours there were questions and answers.

The Swami later commented, 'It is seed-ing time. You cannot have final results now.' How true this was I learned much later. Swami Ranganathananda began to visit Ber-

lin regularly and was also invited to several places in West Germany. He became not only the initiator for the foundation of the formal Vedanta Society in Berlin but also for the Vedanta Besellschaft Dusseldorf.

At one convention I attended, I met Swami Bhavyananda, the then President of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in Bourne End, England. I invited him to come so we could have a second seminar every year. After 1987, however, these senior Swamis had various physical ailments, which made it impossible for either of them to come to Germany.

I was able to make a second visit to India, and this time invited a pravrajika from the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission in New Delhi to kindly come to Germany. Thereafter, Pravrajika Vivekaprana came yearly as our guest and also visited West Germany and Holland. Later Swami Veetamohananda became President of the Gretz Vedanta Centre, and Swami Dayatmananda the President of the Bourne End Centre. Both of them are able to come regularly to Germany for our seminars and lectures.

In 1987, Swami Ranganathananda gave me a letter he had received from a Vedanta friend in Sofia, Bulgaria. The letter was a request for more information on Vedanta. Some people from Bulgaria later became members of our Vedanta Society in Berlin. We then organized lectures and seminars for Swami Veetamohananda in Sofia and Bourgas, Bulgaria. With the Swami we sent four big parcels of Vedanta literature.

Other requests came to Swami Ranganathananda from Krasnodar in Russia. At that time personal contact was not allowed, but there were already six Upanishads translated from English to Russian. We were able to provide them with money so they

could print more copies. Now that small group is in contact with the new centre at Moscow, where Swami Jyotirupananda is President of the Centre.

On Swami Ranganathananda's second visit to Berlin, he had requested me to translate some of his booklets for use at the seminars and lectures. I gained much inspiration from these booklets such as *Science and Religion*, *Faith and Reason*, and other topics. I began this work without any training or experience but with the devoted help of the members of our society. Finally we came out with the book, *The Message of the Upanishads*. This work gave me a deeper understanding of the relation between Vedanta and the new discoveries in science. As Western science is approaching the theory of the universe as being an indivisible, dynamic whole, it is found that scientist have opened their minds to Eastern Philosophy and the spiritual science of Vedanta. I think it will take some generations before this transition is completed. In the future perhaps the scientists will come to understand better the ideas of Vedanta, and be aware of the truth which Sri Ramakrishna so simply expressed, 'My Divine Mother is Brahman'. After that realization many of the prevailing ecological and seemingly unsolvable problems in society will be resolved.

In conclusion, I express my gratitude to God for having been able to visit Belur Math and the other holy places associated with the Ramakrishna Mission, and to feel the spiritual radiance which emanates from there. The future swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission will have much work before them. As they work, they will continue to bring much insight and practical solution to the problems facing people in all the countries of the world. I am sincerely grateful for having got a chance to play a part in this dynamic movement.

Swami Vivekananda

DR. MARTIN KÄMPCHEN

What have the Germans now realized about strength, dynamism, will-power, etc.? What has Swami Vivekananda to offer them? The answer to these questions is of extreme importance to the Indians also—explains Dr. Kämpchen in this thoughtful article. Now residing at Santiniketan, W.B., he has been long associated with the ideas of Swami Vivekananda also.

I have often wondered why Swami Vivekananda is less known in Germany than Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore. And I have come to the conclusion that Germany already has an abundance of 'strong men', both religious and non-religious, of her own and may not be in a desperate need for another from across the seas. In fact, many of the features of Swami Vivekananda's personality—strength, dynamism, will-power, energy—are perceived as typically 'German' traits by the German people themselves and by other peoples as well. These traits have been admired because they are responsible for the extraordinary economic, scientific and cultural progress Germans have made; but they have also become feared because they are equally responsible for the destructive and aggressive tendencies of the German people which had their full play during two world wars. Germans now realize that strength, dynamism, will-power and energy are neither 'good' nor 'bad' in themselves; instead, they derive their value from their application in daily life, or, saying it differently, from the moral force that is behind this strength and will-power.

It is here that we, including every German, have much to learn from the great Swami. A forceful character alone is not enough and not even admirable. It is only when this dynamism receives its direction

from a moral will that the force of personality becomes admirable. This moral will must bestow order and integration to the normally rather scattered energies of a person.

Recently I saw a documentary film on the great German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl. She began as a dancer, and after being discovered for films, she acted in the first mountaineering films that were ever shot. She, a girl, courageously scaled the highest Alpine peaks. During the Third Reich, she herself directed films and with them helped Hitler to project his maniacal ideas to the masses. Her films were excellent as cinematic art and highly innovative, which probably contributed to the enormous effect they had. After the war, she went into making documentaries and photo-books. For months she stayed with remote tribes in Africa filming their daily lives. When she was already seventy years old, Leni Riefenstahl began yet another career; deep-sea-diving. With her husband she dived into the oceans of the world in order to film marine life, and she still continues to do so at the age of ninety. She has an indomitable spirit, she never says die, her supreme will-power can overcome any obstacle. Yet, when she was questioned on her role during the Third Reich, she dismissed the accusations of guilt as 'nonsense'. She had only been doing a job. She was no Nazi, she never hated the Jews.... Leni Riefenstahl lacked the *moral* courage to realize that she had failed to oppose when

opposition was needed in the interest of humanity. So despite her stamina, drive, dynamic spirit and artistic boldness, she lacks real greatness.

Swami Vivekananda's strength was rooted in moral conviction, and, deeper yet,

Swami Vivekananda's strength was rooted in moral conviction, and, deeper yet, in faith. He had to oppose the powers that be, many a time in his life. He opposed the British colonialists at different times, he spoke up against the rich in America when needed. In times of crisis you understand the real value of a person; Swamiji passed the test.

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needed. In times of crisis you understand the real value of a person; Swamiji passed the test.

Contemporary India is, unfortunately, pervaded by a sense of discouragement. Even many young people who by nature should be vivacious, energetic and imbued with a zest to realize certain ideals, succumb to the spirit of lethargy. Seeing the daunting competition for jobs, the exploding numbers of the population, the corruption and nepotism in daily life which is becoming the unabashed norm, they give up trying to build a better society before even trying. Here, the personality of Swami Vivekananda has to come in. This personality possesses everything that young adults need today: self-confidence, the will to take initiative, a sense of purpose, the strength to overcome obstacles, nourished by a deep faith in God and the faith that they are the instruments of God. □



Fancy dress at the Hales

'My Work Must Be Quick as Lightning and Strong as a Thunderbolt'¹

Some thoughts on the centenary of the foundation of
the Ramakrishna Mission

DR. HILTRUD RÜSTAU

We are thankful to Dr. Rüstau, a staunch Vedantin from Berlin, for her clear analysis of the distinguishing features of the Ramakrishna Mission vis-à-vis Western welfare organizations.

It was Holi, 1996, in Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission: the air resounded with gaiety, and clouds of coloured powder glittering in the light of the lovely sunshine created enchantment. The procession around the temples radiated cheerfulness and merriment—with the tinkling bells and devotional songs sung by sannyasins and brahmacharins as well as by lay devotees dedicated to Krishna and Ramakrishna. So much innocent joy of life found its expression that nobody looking on could withdraw from it. How much fun the young novices had when they finally dipped one or the other among themselves in a tub of coloured water!

When after a short while everything was over and the usual solemnity of the Math was restored, I was sitting on the stairs of the lovely shrine of the Holy Mother, reflecting on the History of the Ramakrishna Mission: how everything began with the brotherhood of Ramakrishna's disciples, how they had to search for a place where

they could live together, the days of the Baranagore Math and the Alambazar Math, the donations by Miss Henrietta Müller and Miss Josephine MacLeod. What tremendous work had to be done so that the uneven plot of land could become what it represents today: a serene place where we are able to feel the presence of Swami Vivekananda and his gurubhais (brother disciples), of Sarada Devi, of Sister Nivedita, Miss MacLeod, Mrs. Sarah Bull and so many others. During its one hundred years of existence the Ramakrishna Mission has become an inseparable part of the Indian society and has also established centres in several countries.

Holi gave me a lively impression how full of life the Movement is. How successful its works are we can see from the annual reports by which the diversity and extent of all its activities are strikingly illustrated. I remember also the Parliament of Religions organized by the Ramakrishna Mission in 1993—to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Chicago Parliament—, in which I participated. The excellent preparation and organization and, what mattered most, the unsurpassable hospitality the

1. Swami Gambhirananda, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission*, Advaita Ashrama, 1983, p. 116.

Ramakrishna Mission showed to all the 15,000 participants in the public meetings and to the delegates from four continents of the globe will be for ever remembered. Yes, the Ramakrishna Mission is something unique. It has really put into life what Ramakrishna stressed: *Sivajnane jivapuja* (service to people, knowing that they all are God, that Siva is *jiva*).

Swami Vivekananda had his own experience of what Ramakrishna once stated: 'On an empty stomach, one cannot think of relig-

It is a widespread opinion that Swami Vivekananda's concept of social service was inspired by Christian thoughts and had nothing to do with the Indian traditions.

ion.' Vivekananda's conclusion, based on what he saw and felt during his wanderings in India, was that something had to be done in order to improve the living standards of the Indian masses, because spiritual wisdom could only be imparted if the material basis was prepared for it. Therefore, after he returned from the West in 1897, he had one strong determination: 'To start a machine for elevating the Indian masses'.² The moral and material support needed for this he got from his gurubhais and his Western disciples.

Notwithstanding the deterioration in his health, he convened a gathering of the monastic and lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna in the one week's break he got between a stay in Darjeeling (where he had to go for rest on the advice of doctors) and his journey to Almora. In that gathering, on the first of May 1897, an association called the

Ramakrishna Mission was founded.

It was not so easy for Vivekananda to re-orient the outlook of his gurubhais from their aim of personal salvation to a sympathetic comprehension of the needs of the world and to the service of the suffering, and to convince them that an organization with the triple aim of spiritual, mental and material service of men, carried out through the co-operation of sannyasins, lay-devotees and the general public was really based on the spirit of Ramakrishna. Or, to put it in another way, that social service, the spreading of Ramakrishna's teachings, and the endeavour for personal salvation did not contradict one another but formed an inseparable unity. In the opinion of some of his gurubhais the methods adopted by Vivekananda were based on Western ideas and therefore a deviation from Ramakrishna's message. So his work 'progressed through doubt and reassurance'.³ Even today we come across the claim that Ramakrishna rejected social service⁴, but Swami Vivekananda and also Ramakrishna's widow Sarada Devi have given enough proof that his teachings indeed contain the appeal to undertake spiritualized social service.

Vivekananda's slogan was, '*Atmanah mokshartham jagaddhitaya ca*: for one's own salvation and the welfare of the world', both these aims understood as complementing one another. Consequently the Belur Math Rules start thus: 'This Math is established to work out one's own liberation, and to train oneself to do good to the world in every way, along the lines laid down by Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna....'⁵ Man is seen as a being with both spiritual and material needs, with

2. Sailendra Nath Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda*, part II, Madras, 1976, p. 950.

3. Swami Gambhirananda, op. cit., p. 99.

4. See, e.g. Martin Kämpchen, 'Sri Ramakrishna', *Ein Werkzeug Gottes sein*, Zürich, 1988, p. 31.

5. Swami Gambhirananda, op. cit., p. 108.

neither of these to be neglected. Still, like Ram Mohan Roy before him, Swami Vivekananda too was—for many of his bold ideas—heavily attacked by orthodox Hindus, Christian Missionaries, and also the social reformers whose plans Swamiji felt to be narrow.

It is a widespread opinion that Swami Vivekananda's concept of social service was inspired by Christian thoughts and had nothing to do with the Indian traditions. So Paul Hacker said: '...the founding of the Ramakrishna order for the purpose of preaching Hinduism in India and abroad, for the purpose of general mass-education and philanthropic activity..., was in no way directly inspired by Ramakrishna's ideas.'⁶ Wilhelm Halbfass added to this: 'In fact, the establishment of the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897 was directly influenced by his experiences in America.'⁷

In order to argue against these claims let us compare the Ramakrishna Mission with the 'Deutscher Caritasverband' (German Association for Charity), which too was founded in the same year as the Ramakrishna Mission. Though both the organizations have something in common, mainly in the field of social service, there are fundamental differences. Keeping these differences in mind it is easier to comprehend how far Swami Vivekananda was really inspired by the West and how far his concept was rooted in the Indian traditions which he took up and further developed to suit the new social conditions.

The increase in and intensification of the social conflicts in Germany from the

middle of the nineteenth century onwards were closely linked with the growth of the organized working class movement. Out of this resulted the challenge for the Catholic Church to assume new forms in its social work, aimed at smoothing the social conflicts and at centralization and unification of the long-existing plurality of social services within the Catholic Church. In addition to this, there was already the model of the centralized 'Innere Mission' (Internal Mission) of the Protestant Church, to which as also to the already existing different welfare organizations of the working class, an adequate response had to be made.

Therefore, in 1880, a group of Catholic industrialists founded an association called 'Arbeiterwohl' (Workers' Welfare), and later on, in 1890, the 'Volkverein für das katholische Deutschland' (Peoples' Association for the Catholic Germany) was founded. In both the organizations the main stress laid was on education in order to compete with the 'Arbeiterbildungsverein' (Association for the Workers' Education).

However, since neither of these two organizations founded by the industrialists functioned satisfactorily, in 1897 the Conference of the Catholic Bishops in Germany agreed to the proposal for the foundation of the 'Caritas' brought forward by members of the above mentioned Catholic associations. In the Rules of the 'Caritas' it is said that it is acknowledged and legitimated by the Roman Catholic bishops in Germany and is subordinated to their supervision; and that the episcopate appoints the leadership of the Caritas. The Caritas concentrates on social service, mainly in the field of nursing and medical assistance of every kind. But besides this, economic activities also are carried out: so the Caritas is connected with insurance companies and banks.

In the first years of its existence, the

6. Paul Hacker, *Kleine Schriften*, p. 567, quoted in: Wilhelm Halbfass's 'India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding', Albany, 1988, p. 231.

7. Ibid. p. 233.

growth of the Caritas was slow with regard to membership and local expansion. But during World War I (1914–1918) the Caritas developed rapidly due to its concept of 'war welfare': it was fully engaged in the care of war victims, and so it spread all over Germany. In 1915, the Bishops' Conference acknowledged the Caritas as a representative of the Catholic Church. All Catholic welfare organizations were obliged to become members of the Caritas.

It is quite obvious that the main reason for founding the Caritas was not a religious one. The Caritas did not run schools or encourage technical training or impart training for religious teaching, etc., because, for these tasks there already existed many institutions of the Catholic Church. It was also not a foundation of the Church but of industrialists in close connection with the clergy, though it allowed the German bishops to supervise and centralize the social service.

If we take all this into consideration, we can call it just an accident that the Ramakrishna Mission was founded in the same year as the Caritas. Between these two organizations there exist at least as many differences as between Hinduism and the Catholic version of the Christian religion in general.

The structure, shape and world view of the Caritas had to follow the religious understanding and the structure of the Catholic Church, as such.

If we take all this into consideration, we can call it just an accident that the Ramakrishna Mission was founded in the same year as the Caritas. Between these two organizations there exist at least as many differences as between Hinduism and the Catholic version of the Christian religion in general. No doubt, they had some common

features because of some similarities in the conditions prevailing in Europe and her colonies. At the same time, they had their special features arising from the peculiarities of the conditions in Europe and India—the former experiencing the social conflicts born of the industrial capitalism in Germany, and India suffering social and national problems on account of being a British colony.

That a religious association shall get itself registered under Act XXI of 1860 of the Governor General of India was something new in India, introduced only by the British rule. The need for founding associations, the declaration that the right to form associations is one that is guaranteed under the civil rights of every individual, the law that all associations should be registered—these are all closely connected with the development of the democratic and centralized state and the coming into power of the uniform code of civil law.

Of course, Swami Vivekananda did gain a lot of ideas when he was in the West—after all he did not travel with closed eyes while in the U.S.A., in the different countries of Europe, in the Middle East and in Japan. One important insight he gained in the West was that without organization nothing permanent and really worthwhile could be done in India with regard to the gravity of her national and social problems as well as to the necessity of spreading Ramakrishna's teachings. Still, compared with Western welfare organizations, the Ramakrishna Mission is something special.

The main difference seen is that the Ramakrishna Mission cannot be confined to the definition of a social welfare organization. The Mission is based on the Vedantic world view of Advaita, the Oneness of the world in its divinity, out of which results also the oneness of mankind. According to

the aims and objects adopted on 1 May 1897, the newly founded organization had the task of spreading the teachings of Ramakrishna in India and abroad. But the name 'mission' should not lead us astray, for, the aim was not to proselytize: besides the dissemination of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, the aim of the Mission was declared to be the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions.

Another very important difference is the close connection of the Ramakrishna Mission with the great work of nation-building, interlinked with the demand for social service. This was clearly expressed by Swami Vivekananda when after his return from the West he explained his programme to his compatriots. He pointed out that nationalism of a purely agitational pattern would not carry the Indians far; with patriotism must be associated a real feeling for others, a practical solution for the problems

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on hand, and steadfastness, sincerity, and purity of motive. And he further said: 'I love my nation, I cannot see you degraded, weakened any more than you are now.'⁸ But the aim of strengthening the Indian nation was not to be realized by political means, for, the Ramakrishna Mission was not at all a political association. In the 'Rules' it is clearly stated: 'The aims and ideals of the Mission being purely spiritual and humanitarian, it

shall have no connection with politics.'⁹

One more important difference with the social welfare organization in the West is seen in the Mission's emphasis on education. Swami Vivekananda said that the education of the masses and the improvement of their living conditions are the best means for overcoming social evils. And this education given by the Mission is not in the sense of spreading general knowledge only, but it also keeps in view the development of India. This is in accordance with Swami Vivekananda's Rule 21 for the Ramakrishna Math which envisages the formation of a university with due stress on technology. From the annual reports we can see how much is done every year by the Ramakrishna Mission in the field of education. Particular mention should be made of the technical and professional training given to the youth, and also of the training given to special groups, for example, the physically handicapped and the orphans. As another peculiarity of the Ramakrishna Mission in comparison with the Western welfare organizations we point at the ancient Indian traditional structures of the monastic or religious life followed by the Ramakrishna Centres, which have been modified to suit the changed social conditions and the resulting special demands.

Again, the first service of the Ramakrishna Mission, even before its formal foundation, was famine and plague relief. During the hundred years of its existence the tremendous humanitarian work done by the monastic and lay members of the Mission in innumerable cases of emergency, during catastrophes such as earthquakes, in epidemics and other calamities deserve our highest respect.

Further, the training programme for the monks also, to serve in the educational,

8. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. III, Mayavati, 1989, p. 225.

9. Sailendra Nath Dhar, op. cit., p. 951.

religious and philanthropic fields, started before the Mission's registration. Much developed in the course of time, that programme continues even now.

The methods and activities of the Mission are multifarious, involving the spreading of Vedantic and other religious ideas according to the teachings of Ramakrishna in India and abroad, the training of teachers for the material and spiritual uplift of the masses, the promotion of arts, industries and technological development, and contri-

The methods and activities of the Mission are multifarious, involving the spreading of Vedantic and other religious ideas according to the teachings of Ramakrishna in India and abroad, the training of teachers for the material and spiritual uplift of the masses, the promotion of arts, industries and technological development, and contribution to a better understanding between India and for-

bution to a better understanding between India and foreign countries. So firm is its foundation and growth that many other religious organizations in India which came into being afterwards have been shaped with the Mission as a model.

So it is difficult to answer the question whether Vivekananda would have founded the Ramakrishna Mission if he had not gone to the West. Questions like this one in history can never be definitely answered. In history we are not able to prove by experiments

what would have happened if We have to accept that the basis for the Mission and the brotherhood of the monks as well as their close connection with lay disciples was laid by Ramakrishna himself. After all, how many of the founders of new religious movements in India in the nineteenth century went to the West? One more thing is very clear: without the dramatic changes in India brought about by the colonial rule, the development of the group of followers of Ramakrishna would have been much different. Another point also can be made clearly: though regarding organization, as such, Swami Vivekananda got some stimulus during his visit to the West, still, in its essential features the Ramakrishna Mission is guided by the Indian heritage. It answers spiritually, mentally and materially to the needs of our time in a typically Indian way, though within this framework we may recognize some methods, concepts, etc. adopted from the West. That such adoption has been fruitful is because of the fact that the social changes and conflicts, and also the spiritual needs both in the West and in India are basically the same, notwithstanding differences in many respects.

Deep roots in the Indian tradition, readiness for assimilating new and better methods and views, and the firm base of Vedantic ideas—out of which the philosophy of selfless service, too, to the needy and distressed is derived—, these are the key factors because of which the Ramakrishna Mission has remained quick and strong. □

Be ye turned into gold by once touching the philosopher's stone, then if you are laid deep under the earth for a thousand years, you will remain gold for ever and behave like gold when you are dug out.

—Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, p. 88

Centenary Letters

Dear Swami,

All of a sudden, like a bolt from the blue, I received a letter from the Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* asking me to write an article or letter conveying my feelings with regard to two events: Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission, and Hundred years since Swamiji's first return to India after preaching Vedanta in the West.

I was so touched and overwhelmed at the thought that Sri Ramakrishna never forsakes His devotees. This is one more incident of such a type in my own life, and I can only bow down before Him for keeping me in touch with Him. What a grace!

It is by Sri Ramakrishna's will that I am for over 29 years in Germany. There is nothing new in what I write below. However, for every individual who comes to this earth, each phase of life is a new experience for herself/himself—unique in its characteristics and involvement.

Ramakrishna—this wonderful word is the 'magic word' for me, and He whom I so devotedly associate with this word has played during my childhood and later years, unknown to me at that time, a very vital role in my life, and now, when I am very much conscious and aware of it, has me completely in His 'magic spell'.

And this would not have been possible but for the fact that the Ramakrishna Mission in Khar, Mumbai, was just two railway stations from our home in Vile Parle where I spent most of my childhood and school years with my brother and parents. My mother is a staunch devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and, in those early years, she used to visit the Mission at least once a week. In those days we did not have a car nor the means to afford a taxi. So the journey one way used to take my mother more than an hour of walking plus the bus ride. And at times we children would grumble, but she just used to ignore our protests and take us along with her. Of course, once in the Mission we used to like it, especially when we were given extra *prasad* by the loving Swamis. My mother used to avail of the opportunity to come a long time before the *arati* and meditate. But it was not quite that comfortable for us children to sit quietly so long. During the *arati*, however, we were really fascinated by the lovely prayer which we had learnt to sing. The singing of the devotees and the sound of the cymbals filled the dusk air and created an atmosphere almost celestial. And these were reasons enough to encourage us to come again with our mother.

You may be wondering why I write all this and what connection it has with the centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission. Today, looking back, I feel that it was owing to the infinite grace of Sri Ramakrishna that my mother was so devoted to Him. Was it mere coincidence that the Ramakrishna Mission had started in Khar and was within easy reach of us? How blessed we are that our mother sowed in us the seeds to enable us to worship and revere Sri Ramakrishna even at a very tender age! All this would not have been possible had not Swami Vivekananda, with the blessing of the Holy Mother, started the Ramakrishna Order one hundred years ago on his return to India in 1897 after preaching Vedanta in the West.

This Order has been rendering marvellous service to the people of India in several spheres, running charitable hospitals and dispensaries, schools and colleges for meritorious and needy students, organizing and carrying out rescue work during epidemics, floods and earthquakes. People in need of solace and counsel during troubles, depression and bereavement have this bulwark of Ramakrishna Mission, spread throughout India, where they can

get genuine advice, help and moral support, something rare, something extra-ordinary, because such advice, help and support come from the messengers of Sri Ramakrishna, from the innumerable Swamis, His devoted servants who have renounced hearth and home in search of God. I am one of these very fortunate persons who has been so helped with consolation and strength-giving advice by the various Swamis (and also by the Pravrajikas of the Sarada Math) both in India and out here in Europe.

As already said before, this wonderful message of Sri Ramakrishna was carried abroad and propagated by Swami Vivekananda for the first time at the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. He remained nearly 4 years in America and Europe, lecturing and holding classes. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, chapter 4, verse 8, Sri Krishna says: 'For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of Dharma, I am born age after age.' To me it seems that these words of assurance could not be more true.

During the last fifty years and more so during the last twenty-five years, the whole world has become so small, has become so close. What I mean is that distance is no longer a big or difficult barrier to overcome. For instance, I am here now in Germany and if I wish and have the necessary funds, I can be in India tomorrow—the jet age has made this very easy and possible. And the computer internet era is progressing at such a breath-taking pace that one sometimes feels lost in this whirlpool of multi-media.

And my feeling is that Swamiji, through the Lord's will, came just at the right time to spread the message of Vedanta in the West. Although it is the most ancient scripture known to the world, Vedanta is yet in harmony with the highest flights of modern science. Besides, there has been an influx of citizens of India to all parts of Europe and America. People like me were, in their young age, charmed and excited to come to the West; it is still considered a big privilege and a blessing by many. But as time goes by and as old age sets in, there arises a gnawing feeling in the heart and one realizes, at times too late, that one belongs neither to the East nor to the West—it is a strange mixed feeling, indescribable. And here comes the vital role of the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Vedanta, and the wonderful fact of the existence of the Ramakrishna Mission in India and abroad. Now that my daughters have grown up, and being alone I have plenty of time to ponder, I just keep marvelling and wondering at God's ways of working to help mankind realize that Truth is Universal and not the exclusive possession of any one creed, race or epoch.

The joy that I had during my association with the Ramakrishna Mission in my early years in India has become my solace and strength in my later years here in Germany. This would not have been possible without the concrete help and guidance of the monks of the Ramakrishna Centres in Europe. The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda-Vedanta literature available here has also been a big source of enlightenment and peace for me, and I know this holds true also for very many European seekers of spirituality. Books on Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, and the other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, etc. are frequently being translated into various European languages to make them easily understood and widely accessible to the seekers of Vedanta. A marvellous selfless service has been done in the past and is still being done by the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and followers of Vedanta.

The Ramakrishna Mission started one hundred years ago in India. But the need for more such centres is being felt by many Westerners and by Indians residing abroad. As one of the leading Swamis put it during one of his European tours, the people in the West are materially well off, but there is a very big cry for something deeper; they are frantically

searching for 'yoga', which is the only cure for their 'bhoga' which has led them to the modern 'roga' of restlessness. In my opinion, this cry for peace holds good not only for the Europeans but for all people living in the Western world, including, naturally, the people of Indian origin in these parts.

Sri Ramakrishna's message brought abroad by Swami Vivekananda could not have been more timely. The Lord was aware that this message would not fall on fruitless grounds, for it was ripe and ready for receiving and assimilating a philosophy coming from the East. Those living in the West are aware that many sincere and devoted Christians with sound commonsense are no longer willing to gulp everything the Church or the Vatican dictates. They are frantically searching for a philosophy (and that is one of the reasons for the flourishing of the sects in the West) which can be scientifically proved and at the same time has a deeper significance and intimate personal connection with the Lord. Vedanta and the message of Sri Ramakrishna as put forward by Swami Vivekananda is just the right remedy for the illness prevailing here at the moment. Again, I repeat, this is my observation and feeling. The Swamis lecturing abroad very rightly tell their Western audience: by reading and following the message of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Vedanta, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, etc. you do not become a Hindu, because conversion is not the intent of the Ramakrishna Mission; but you become a better person, a truly religious person.

I have so many examples in justification of the above statement: one of my very good German friends has really learnt to understand the message of Christ after she came into association with Vedanta and the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission in the West. She goes to the Church, but she has been initiated and she reads the *Gospel* and the life of the Holy Mother. At last she has found her path. For her there is no contradiction between the two religions, only the paths are different.

This is exactly what Sri Ramakrishna came to teach us. Initially Swami Vivekananda, and later his other brother disciples spread His message in India and abroad. This work started a hundred years ago is still being continued by the later generation of monks of the Ramakrishna Mission in India and abroad. What a wonderful place this world now racked by wars would become if each of us would only work hard to reach the goal shown by Sri Ramakrishna.

Gita Das
Dortmund, Germany

With a view to purifying Myself by the dust of his feet, I always follow the sage who cares for nothing, is calm, bears enmity to none, and is even-minded.

High-souled sages—penniless, devoted to Me, and unsmitten by desires, calm and compassionate to all creatures—derive that bliss of Mine which they only know who care for no gain, and not others.

O Uddhava, neither Yoga, nor knowledge, nor piety, nor study, nor austerity, nor renunciation captivates Me so much as a heightened devotion to Me.

—*The Last Message of Shri Krishna*, chapter 9, ślokas 16, 17, 20

'A Readiness to Get Truth from Whatever Quarter of the Horizon It May Hail':

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Friederich Max Müller and Swami Vivekananda
united in a common cause

DR. GWILYM BECKERLEGGE

This brief and tightly argued article points to the spirit of universalism which was already growing in the West even before Swami Vivekananda spoke on it at the Parliament of Religions in 1893. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Max Müller were two of the well known personalities of their times who were imbued with that outlook. And, as the author says, 'Although separated by time and geography, Emerson, Müller and Swami Vivekananda were joined together through a web of relationships, both direct and indirect, which was created in the common cause of trying to foster a new spirit of religious liberalism enriched by both Indian and Western spirituality.'

Dr. Beckerlegge, from the Department of Religious Studies, The Open University, Manchester, United Kingdom, is long known to the PB and is one of its subscribers.

The nineteenth century saw a current of religious liberalism gather strength in India, Britain and the United States. One of its expressions was the quest for a universalism that would bind together people of different religious persuasions and different nationalities. In India this hope brought together Brahmo thinkers, such as Rammohun Roy and Keshub Chunder Sen, and Unitarians both in India and in the West. It also sustained Swami Vivekananda when he journeyed to the West in 1893 to attend the World's Parliament of Religions. That Swami Vivekananda was able to make such a journey and plant the seeds of Vedanta in the West at that time remains a remarkable achievement, especially when one remembers that the World's Parliament of Religions was expected to proclaim the superiority of Christianity over the other religions represented. But many of those who heard Vivekananda at or after the Parliament of Religions were not totally unfamiliar with Hindu religious philosophy, although his coming may have given them the

first opportunity to hear it from the lips of a living exponent.

There had been a slow but growing interest in Hindu thought in the West since the latter part of the eighteenth century, and certain key personalities were responsible for popularizing this new knowledge. Two such figures were Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), the New England Transcendentalist, and Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), the German Indologist who made his home in Oxford. Both have been described as 'fathers' of the comparative study of religions in their own countries and, although academics might wish to debate these claims, few would deny that both Emerson and Müller played significant roles in popularizing a knowledge of Indian religious thought.¹ In marking the centenary of Vivekananda's return from the West and the effective founding of the Ramakrishna Math

1. See, for example, Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia*, p. 247f, and Sharpe, *Comparative Religion*, p. 35.

and Mission in 1897, it is timely to recall the way the ground in which Vivekananda planted the seeds of Vedanta in the West had been prepared by Emerson and Müller.

Katherine Sanborn, who did so much to help Vivekananda on his arrival in the United States, came from a family with an association with New England Transcendentalism.² Emersonians and Transcendentalists were among those who received Swami Vivekananda so warmly at the World's Parliament of Religions.³ Vivekananda later addressed the Free Religious Association founded by Emerson.⁴ Müller's translations of classical Hindu texts, of course, had found a readership in both Europe and the United States long before Vivekananda arrived in the West 1893. More specifically, Müller welcomed Vivekananda in Oxford as a representative of the 'living Vedanta' that he had so come to admire. Having learnt more about Ramakrishna from Vivekananda, Müller subsequently completed two studies of Ramakrishna's life and teachings which were read as far afield as the United States and Russia.

Like Müller, Emerson never travelled to India which remained for both a source of distant fascination. Emerson, however, shared a correspondence with Max Müller and visited Müller at his Oxford home when travelling in Europe in 1873, as indeed did Vivekananda in 1896. For his part, Müller saluted Emerson, on the occasion of the latter's seventieth birthday in 1880, by speaking of him as 'his American Guru, Amarasanu' and by sending him an extract from a newly-discovered Upanishad. Emerson, who died in 1882, was denied the opportunity of meeting Vivekananda during the Swami's travels in the West in the last decade of the nineteenth century. It is certain, however, that Vivekananda knew of Em-

son's reputation and of his attachment to Hindu thought. In fact, Vivekananda believed that Emerson's knowledge of the *Bhagavadgita* was responsible for the kind of religious outlook for which Emerson and his circle became famous.⁵ Although separated by time and geography, Emerson, Müller

The attraction to Hindu thought manifested by both Emerson and Müller, however, was not simply the outcome of a distant, objective interest. It was rooted partly in the dissatisfaction that both voiced about the dogmatism and constraints of the religious traditions in which they were raised.

and Swami Vivekananda were joined together through a web of relationships, both direct and indirect, which was created in the common cause of trying to foster a new spirit of religious liberalism enriched by both Indian and Western spirituality. We can be confident that Emerson would have found Vivekananda's ideas congenial, had the span of their lives overlapped sufficiently.

The attraction to Hindu thought manifested by both Emerson and Müller, however, was not simply the outcome of a distant, objective interest. It was rooted partly in the dissatisfaction that both voiced about the dogmatism and constraints of the religious traditions in which they were raised. For Emerson, a Unitarian pastor until 1832, Unitarianism represented a revolt against the pessimism that had characterized the dominant Calvinistic Puritanism of New England. Yet, even so he continued to rebel against religious formalism and resigned his pastorate, having become a founder-member of the Transcendentalist Club. Churches were to him but 'yokes to the neck'. The ports of New England saw traffic with the

2. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, I, p. 403.

3. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, I, p. 429.

4. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, I, p. 510.

5. Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, IV, p. 96.

East and, while some New Englanders devoted themselves to the cause of Christian mission, Emerson and others of his ilk began to read about the East and its philosophies. Emerson's earliest writing about Hinduism in a poem called 'Indian Superstition', completed when he was seventeen, was far from sympathetic but that was to change. Max Müller, raised in Lutheran Germany, was no less critical of religious dogmatism. On taking up a teaching post at Oxford, he entered the Anglican Church because '...its members enjoy greater freedom from priestcraft than those of any other Church'.⁶ Müller's writings about India and its religious systems, like those of Emerson, also contained a critical vein; for example, he found the

It would be wrong, however, to understand the attraction felt by Emerson and Müller for Hindu thought as simply a movement from one religious tradition to another. For what gripped both these thinkers was a vision of unity which they felt had been lost in, or certainly overshadowed by, the parochialism that they had come to associate with their everyday experience of Christianity

worship of Kali 'hideous'.⁷ For a considerable length of time, it is clear that Müller believed that Hindu India was ripe to fall into the hands of Christian missionaries. Yet, he too came to a very different opinion in the latter part of his life.

In some respects, the attitudes of Emerson and Müller to the religious traditions in which they were raised can be compared with those of Margaret Noble (better known as Vivekananda's disciple, Sister Nivedita). Margaret Noble wrote of the 'growing uncertainty and despair, with regard to Religion' that had beset many Western intellec-

tuals in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but noted that not all had shared the resulting 'spirit of doubt and negation'. Some had shown 'a readiness to get truth from whatever quarter of the horizon it may hail'.⁸ Margaret Noble's journey to India was part of that search for truth. For Emerson and Müller the journey was less dramatic but no less transforming. Emerson declared, 'The stern old faiths have all pulverized. 'Tis a whole generation of gentlemen and ladies out in search of religions'.⁹

As we have seen, both Emerson and Müller showed early signs of dissatisfaction with the formalized expressions of Christianity, with which they were most familiar. This dissatisfaction turned their interests towards Hinduism and other Eastern religions, and was in turn fed by their deepening acquaintance with these distant religious traditions. Both were eclectic by nature, and their personal philosophies were also profoundly affected by Western idealism manifested in ancient Greek philosophy and in nineteenth-century German philosophy. Neither threw off a dislike of popular cultic Hinduism. Over the course of their lives, however, their temperaments and reading led them increasingly to respond positively to certain strands within the Hindu tradition which they believed expressed most fully their own deepest spiritual insights and yearnings. Thus Emerson declared, '...to dwell in the conception of the fundamental Unity...finds its highest expression in the religious writings of the East, and chiefly in the Indian Scriptures, in the Vedas, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the *Vishnu Purana*'.¹⁰ Towards the last years of his life, Müller affirmed, '...I know of no better preparation for it [death] than the Vedanta philosophy'¹¹, causing Vivekananda to observe

8. Nivedita, *Complete Works*, II, p. 389f.

9. Emerson, *Complete Works*, VI, p. 195.

10. Emerson, *Complete Works*, IV, p. 50.

11. *Three Lectures of Vedanta Philosophy*, p. 8.

6. G.A. Müller, *Life and Letters*, II, p. 413.

7. 'A Real Mahatman', p. 19.

that Müller had '...taken in Vedanta, bones and all'.¹²

It would be wrong, however, to understand the attraction felt by Emerson and Müller for Hindu thought as simply a movement from one religious tradition to another. For what gripped both these thinkers was a vision of unity which they felt had been lost in, or certainly overshadowed by, the parochialism that they had come to associate with their everyday experience of Christianity. 'Let us build altars,' Emerson wrote, 'to the Blessed Unity which holds nature and souls in perfect solution'.¹³ Müller responded so positively to what he heard about Sri Ramakrishna because he regarded this as evidence of a sense of the presence of God in India. This shared sense would provide a common ground on '...which Hindus and non-Hindus may join hands and hearts in worshipping the same Supreme Spirit—who is not far from every one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being'.¹⁴

Thus, when Swami Vivekananda stood before the audience at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago and spoke of 'a religion which had taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance', to many in the audience and to many who read his words afterwards he appeared to symbolize the response of the East to a quest that had already taken shape in the West.¹⁵ In drawing upon the *Bhagavadgita*'s teachings that 'all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me', Vivekananda may have been introducing some to the *Gita*, but the message was one that many had already reached intuitively. These were people who were waiting to make common cause with

others who shared the same realization. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that, when Vivekananda returned to India in 1897, he was followed by several disciples like Sister Nivedita who were ready 'to get truth from whatever quarter of the horizon it may hail'. Yet, it should not be forgotten that many more who were profoundly committed to the same spiritual goals remained in the West like Emerson and Müller before them.

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12. Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, VIII, p. 342.

13. Emerson, *Complete Works*, VI, p. 51.

14. *Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings*, p. x.

15. Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, I, p. 1f.

The Ramakrishna Mission: Personal Memories and Reflexions of a Christian

FR. J.B. SIMON VERMOT, C.R.

This is a short and beautiful contribution, straight from the heart. We see here, in contrast to the old 'exclusivistic' outlook, the present 'inclusivistic' attitude of Christianity towards religious diversity.

The respected author resides in Switzerland.

On the occasion of the centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission, I am happy to express the gratitude I owe, as a Christian priest, to the monastic Order founded by Vivekananda, which I know mostly through its journal *Prabuddha Bharata*, and also through direct contact with some Swamis. I want to explain, in this short contribution, what Ramakrishna Mission means for me, how it represents to some extent, for me and for European readers, the great message of India. These lines will therefore be a kind of letter or personal testimony, and I apologize for doing so rather than writing a formal article.

In 1947 already, I was sent to Kalimpong, in North India (West Bengal), to join the mission run by the Fathers of our monastery of Saint Maurice (Switzerland). From that time on, I had a few contacts with Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission, and I became a regular reader of *Prabuddha Bharata*. Since these first years of my activity as a Christian missionary, I was very much attracted by Indian spirituality. While teaching in our school of St. Augustine in Kalimpong, and later on while visiting people in the villages of the Himalayan hills, giving religious instruction and celebrating holy mass, I used to dive into Indian culture and mentality by reading the Upanishads, Sankara, Ramanuja and other masters, by studying Indian thought and philosophy. This period of my life was like a long immer-

sion in the Indian land, a living contact with India which enabled me to commune deeply with its soul. And it had a lasting effect, which persists even now, although I have been back in Europe for many years.

So, after fifteen years spent in the hills surrounding Kalimpong, I had, due to different circumstances, to return to our monastery in Switzerland. But I have never lost the keen interest I had for Indian culture, and I continued to be in touch with its wisdom—India is for me, so to say, a second mother country. This did not prevent me at all from keeping entire faithfulness to my Christian faith, and also remaining fully rooted in our occidental world. On the contrary, to live thus mentally, as it were, both in the occidental world and in the oriental one is a fascinating experience.

To be in constant contact with Indian spirituality, the Indian way of approaching realities and tackling problems is very inspiring and stimulating. It compels us to rethink our own points of view, enriching them with those of others. This mutual encounter between two very different cultures and religions in spite of unavoidable tensions, is a boon for deepening more and more our mind and life. We thus realize that God is the centre, the source and aim of all people, whatever their nationality and religion is, and that in Him we all meet.

To come back to the Ramakrishna Mission and its journal, the monthly reading of

Prabuddha Bharata is for me a very valuable help to continue reflexion and action in the light of the Indian outlook. I quite appreciate its thoughtful articles on Vedantic subjects, its presentation of Saints or Mystics, its 'interreligious forum', its analysis of modern problems, etc.

Besides spiritual and intellectual researches, I am also in contact with some Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission. Long ago, I met with Swami Nityabodhananda, the Director of the Vedantic Centre of Geneva, who died a few years ago, and whom I valued highly for his wisdom and gentleness. With his successor, Swami Amarananda, too, I have quite friendly relations. He even invited me once to give a lecture in his Centre on the occasion of the anniversary of the birthday of Ramakrishna. He suggested to me to speak about Ramakrishna

of spiritual experience is made difficult. We need more silence and contemplation. This is not due to a lack of mystics in the Christian tradition—they are on the contrary quite numerous, but they remain unknown to most people. The Desert Fathers, Saint Augustine, the Byzantine Hesychasts, Saint John of the Cross, Saint Therasa of Avila, and others need to be rediscovered. The stimulating example of Ramakrishna may incite us to that rediscovery, and at the same time lead to a contemplative life suited to our modern conditions. Other examples in the life of Ramakrishna—his meekness, humility, respect for the way of others, show that imitating him may inspire Christians to live more according to the values of the Gospel.

Yet another feature makes his message prophetic: in his time already, he realized that the human family is one, and that a deep

Truly, Christians may see in the saint of Dakshineswar a man led by the Spirit of God, attracted by the Lord, overwhelmed with an unquenchable thirst for realizing his Face. This is for us Christians a great example. Our occidental world is so much pervaded with technique, quest for material welfare, mentality of competition and efficiency that the spiritual dimension of man is, as it were, obliterated, so much so that the westerners become depressive and lose the real sense of life.

'as seen by a devout Christian'. That meeting gave rise to fruitful exchanges between all the participants.

Truly, Christians may see in the saint of Dakshineswar a man led by the Spirit of God, attracted by the Lord, overwhelmed with an unquenchable thirst for realizing his Face. This is for us Christians a great example. Our occidental world is so much pervaded with technique, quest for material welfare, mentality of competition and efficiency that the spiritual dimension of man is, as it were, obliterated, so much so that the westerners become depressive and lose the real sense of life. Even in our church prayers, quite often too many words and explanations stress the mind and tend to confine it to the rational plane only, so that the arising

bond unites all religious traditions. This conviction led him to know by personal experience not only the various trends of Hindu spirituality, but also to some extent Islam and Christianity. As we celebrate the centenary of the return to India of Vivekananda after preaching Vedanta in America and some other countries, this openmindedness is very significant. It encourages us to foster the interreligious dialogue, which gets nowadays more and more important.

There was a time in Christianity when suspicion and condemnation of other religions was, if not the rule, at least the common trend of mind. Happily, especially since the Second Vatican Council, this time is over. Without in the least renouncing the identity of our Christian faith, we recognize that the

Spirit of God not only is present and at work in the hearts of all men, but that His influence pervades also the sacred Scriptures of all religions. Mutual acceptance, amity in plurality in a rapidly unifying world, becomes both a necessity and a blessing. It leads to dialogue at all levels: in everyday life and contacts, in academic and intellectual discussions, in cooperation for development, in the efforts for peace and, what is still more important, at the spiritual level. The spiritual experience is in fact the real and most profound space of dialogue and communion between people of different faiths.

For a few decades, pioneers like J. Monchanin, H. Le Saux, B. Griffith, Thomas Merton, and others did much to promote such a

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spiritual dialogue. Little by little it is spreading in Christian monasteries all over the world. Benedictine monks played a leading role a few decades ago, when they created the 'Inter-Monastic-Dialogue', a movement now organized at the international level. A text of the authorities of the Roman Church, which encourages this movement, says:

At a deeper level, persons rooted in their own religious traditions can share their experiences of prayer, contemplation, faith, and duty, as well as their expressions and ways of searching for the Absolute. This type of dialogue can be a mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation for promoting and preserving the highest values and spiritual ideals of man. It leads naturally to each partner communicating to the other the reasons

for his own faith. The sometimes profound differences between the faiths do not prevent this dialogue. Those differences, rather, must be referred back in humility and confidence to God who 'is greater than our heart' (I. Jn. 3, 20).

Meetings between monks of different religions take place regularly. Such exchanges, in an atmosphere of prayer, friendship and mutual understanding, without departing from one's own convictions, are very important in our modern world: Everywhere people of different countries live together, bringing into contact their own cultures and religious traditions; without this communion in the depth of the heart, world peace, in spite of political and economic agreement, will always be threatened. To quote Thomas Merton:

The point to be stressed is the importance of serious communication, and indeed of 'communion', among contemplatives of different traditions, disciplines and religions. This can contribute much to the development of man at this crucial point of history. Indeed, we find ourselves in a crisis, a moment of crucial choice. We are in grave danger of losing a spiritual heritage that has been painfully accumulated by thousands of generations of saints and contemplatives. It is the peculiar office of the monk in the modern world to keep alive the contemplative experience and to keep the way open for modern technological man to recover the integrity of his own inner depths.

In that interreligious dialogue, there are certainly difficulties and obscurities, especially on the intellectual plane. But if we all are open to the Spirit of God and earnest in prayer, we may be confident He will lead us 'to the whole truth' (cf. Jn. 16,13). We may hopefully expect that He Himself, the Lord of all nations, will use the wonderfully variegated gifts He bestowed on each of them to build a world of truth, love and peace. □

Alleviating Spiritual Poverty: The Work of the Ramakrishna Mission in America

PRAVRAJIKA VRAJAPRANA

The Ramakrishna Mission's services in India—running schools, colleges and hospitals, organizing relief during disasters, etc.—are necessary and 'visible'. But what is the Mission doing abroad, as for example in America, where such services are unnecessary? It is rendering 'invisible service', says the author. The members of the Vedanta Societies are striving to live religion and show what it is, silently trying to alleviate the spiritual poverty in America. For, as she says, 'the world is not so much without religion as a world that doesn't know what real religion is.' Without directly referring to Swamiji's question, 'Is Vedanta the Future Religion?' the Pravrajika seems to be saying, Yes, of course, it is! The trend in American religious aspiration shows that the non-dogmatic, non-institutional, personal and yet humanistic Vedanta is indeed the future religion of the world.

We are thankful to the Pravrajika, a sannyasini at the Sarada Convent, Santa Barbara, California, for this excellent contribution.

Atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya ca—'Liberation for oneself and service to humanity'—is more than a mere slogan for the Ramakrishna Order. Slogans easily become platitudes which slip into clichés. For those whose lives have been dedicated to the ideals of Ramakrishna Mission, this twofold affirmation is everything that the Order stands for: it is the goal as well as the way to attain the goal. It is, aphoristically stated, a stencil upon which we can trace our daily lives.

In India the service aspect of the Ramakrishna Mission is easy to see. It is a deeply inspiring experience. Anyone seeing the Ramakrishna Mission in action cannot help but be moved by the sheer weight of the work performed with attention, enthusiasm, and reverence. From primary schools to rigorous colleges, from flood relief to feeding the indigent, from village dispensaries to multi-storied hospitals, from schools for the blind and vocational training schools to rebuilding broken buildings and broken

lives ravaged by earthquake—the list is as impressive as it is endless. One is as much awed by the monks' single-minded dedication as the work itself. This is what one might term 'visible service'. There is also a great deal of 'invisible service'.

Those who meditate in solitude or worship in the shrine are also performing service. By wholeheartedly devoting themselves to spiritual realization, these monks are directly watering the tree that yields the fruit of service. Unless the ideal of God-realization is given primacy, the ideal of service can easily fall into patterns of egotism and self-aggrandizement. By keeping the ideal of God-realization in the foreground, the great tree of the Ramakrishna Mission can grow thick roots in the soil of spirituality, offering under its spreading branches shelter to those benefited by its service.

The quiet efforts of the monk who writes words of inspiration for hungry souls whose faces he'll never see also performs

great service. So also the monk who spends endless hours behind a desk, battling forms and paperwork in lieu of typhoons and viruses. So also the monk who blinks at the computer screen. That their service is less visible doesn't make it less essential. Each monk's offering is quietly heroic in its own unique way. As integral a whole as a symphony, the Ramakrishna Mission draws from each monk's life a distinct melody line in a grand harmony of work and worship.

The work of the Ramakrishna Order in America falls, for the most part, in the area of 'invisible service'.¹ Does that make our work somehow less profound? Not at all. It is the work requisite for a nation groaning under the burden of surfeit in every area save depth and meaning.

As with India, the mission of the Vedanta Societies—the branches of the Ramakrishna Order in the West—is 'service to humanity'. Again, as with India, our focus is centred on those needs which are the most keenly felt. In North America, this means

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that the focus of our service is to alleviate spiritual poverty—the hunger of the soul, the thirst for a meaningful existence.

America is a contradictory country, a hodge-podge of varying elements and agendas that are frequently at odds with one

other. But there are a few constants in this wildly changing flux, and one such constant is an abiding commitment to religion.

This is not to deny that we have been, and to a certain extent still are, a materialistic country—in the sense that we are smothered by an overflow of consumer goods and are endlessly bombarded by media insinuations that we somehow need them. What is important to remember, however, is that materialism—having things for the sake of having them—is not generally regarded as a good thing in and of itself. Due to the very fact that we are *awash* with material goods, a level of profound dissatisfaction has been reached.

Yearning for something greater and higher, North Americans are now, as the century closes, witnessing a time of spiritual renewal, the evidence of which can be seen in every facet of society. A survey taken by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation revealed that 'virtually half of those polled reported that their lives had become more spiritual in the past few years....a vast majority—82 per cent—...consider themselves "somewhat or very spiritual."' ²

This year alone, five medical schools in the United States have made classes on religion mandatory for its future physicians. Other medical schools are expected to follow suit. Newly published books show a remarkable increase in titles invoking spirituality. Spirituality is called upon not only in the ever-increasing numbers of religious and self-help books, but also in books on business and organizational tactics, interpersonal relationships, family and parenting issues, home decorating, weight reduction, and homosexuality.

1. It should be noted here that many of the North American Vedanta Societies do perform social service—feeding the homeless, volunteering in soup kitchens, hospitals, etc. It is not, however, the Societies' primary emphasis.

2. Sharon Doyle Driedger, 'On a Higher Plane', *Macleans*, 1 January 1996, p. 23.

Not long ago, God and religion were considered the last taboos of polite conversation. While every other subject had become fair game, the discussion of deeply held religious beliefs was simply poor taste—an embarrassment. Now there is nothing *more* popular to discuss, not only in general conversation, but in the print media, radio and television talk shows, and in chat rooms on the Internet as well. Ironically, spirituality has even been used by advertisers as a magic wand to sell products such as jeans, cologne, and hamburgers. Nothing, it seems, sells like transcendence. Why? Successful advertisers appeal to the population's deep-seated needs, and at this point the most deeply felt urge is a spiritual basis for living. 'From around the water cooler to the Internet, spirituality is in vogue', John

ligion since the Puritans arrived on the shores, creating what they hoped would be 'a new Jerusalem...a city upon a hill'—a nation devoted to God (at least the Puritans' idea of God) and their idea of a God-fearing life. We are still a nation preoccupied with religion, but the old forms of institutional religion have now mostly fallen into disuse, discarded like empty candy wrappers.

The polls inform us that approximately 93 per cent of Americans believe in God or a Universal Spirit. Only 9 per cent profess no religion at all. There are more churches in the United States than any other nation on earth—one for every 900 Americans.⁵ But today far fewer people are taking their religion into the churches their parents attended. Only 45 per cent of the American population

This year alone, five medical schools in the United States have made classes on religion mandatory for its future physicians. Other medical schools are expected to follow suit. Newly published books show a remarkable increase in titles invoking spirituality. Spirituality is called upon not only in the ever-increasing numbers of religious and self-help books, but also in books on business and organizational tactics, interpersonal relationships, family and parenting issues, home decorating, weight reduction, and homosexuality.

Stackhouse, professor of religion at Manitoba, remarked. 'People are looking for the transcendent.'³ Adds Os Guinness of the Trinity Forum, a religious think tank in Virginia, 'People in the pews are disgruntled. People want some kind of spirituality, but they also want meaning....In the past five years I have run into countless people who have everything in terms of money and power, but find that life is empty and they want more.'⁴

America has been preoccupied with re-

now regularly attends church services.⁶ Those that *do*, for the most part, no longer attend the 'mainline' Protestant denominations that were the previous bulwarks of institutional Christianity and American society.

The largest growing Christian sects are evangelical—that is, ones with an emphasis on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Evangelical religions are loosely organized, non-hierarchical, and non-institutional. Ac-

3. Ibid.

4. 'Influence of New Age, Megachurches Grows', *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 August 1996, pp. 1-4.

5. 'Spiritual America', *U.S. News and World Report*, 4 April 1994, pp. 48-50.

6. Bruce D. Marshall, 'Why Bother with the Church?' *The Christian Century*, 24 January 1996, p. 74.

According to many, we are in 'post-denominational' times: Americans today are creating their *own* religion, building interior churches, synagogues, and temples inside their own hearts. According to *U.S. News and World Report*, 'A series of recent studies have found people less committed to particular denominations, more eclectic in their religious views, more tolerant of other faiths and more focused inward on their own spiritual journeys and on meeting their own personal needs.'⁷

What this means on the practical level is that while mainstream churches are seemingly becoming relics of a by-gone era, interest in spirituality as a personal, immediate experience of God is growing exponentially. What people find lacking in institutional re-

tary, the press, the medical establishment, or institutional religions—has permeated North American society and nearly every institution has suffered under increased scrutiny. Those whom we made heroes were found to have clay feet. Gurus and cults of both Eastern and Western creeds fared no better. Scandals hovered over successive 'enlightened' teachers and preachers—for a nation so pitifully gullible and yet so hungry for spiritual truth, the hurt was all the greater.

As importantly, the very foundations of traditional mainline churches have been called into question. A generation ago, one could live in a homogenized community and never encounter people from other cultures and religions. Today that is well-nigh

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ligions they are finding on their own, wherever they can get it. Remi de Roo, the Roman Catholic bishop of Victoria, Canada, commented that 'while the physical membership of churches is collapsing all around us, that doesn't mean people are less religious. It's fascinating how words like "values," "soul," and "spirit" are coming back into ordinary discourse. People are as spiritually inclined as ever.'⁸

What prompted the change?

A growing distrust for all institutions—whether it be politicians, the mili-

impossible. No matter where a person lives in this vast country, one is just as likely to have a Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu living next door as a white, Anglo-Saxon Christian.

Perhaps the person sitting next to you at the computer terminal is a Buddhist from Thailand; perhaps your next-door neighbour is a Hindu from Bangalore; perhaps your daughter is marrying a Muslim from Bosnia. The very concept of 'American' has changed so dramatically in the past generation that the once almost totally white, Christian society is in culture shock. It is easy to affirm that non-Christians are doomed to darkness when you don't happen to know any; it's much more difficult when they become your in-laws, friends, neighbours, and

7. Ibid., p. 50.

8. 'New Age Dreams in Hard Times', *Macleans*, 10 October 1994, p. 38.

colleagues.

Another shift is that today many people prefer to look upon God as a Universal Spirit or a Higher Power, not as a man who sits upon a throne in the sky. Not finding their spiritual life particularly enriched by going into a church where codified prayers are recited, they have rejected institutional churches, seeking communion with the Spirit in forests, mountains, and deserts.

The patriarchal nature of traditional Christianity and the patriarchal hierarchy of many Christian churches have also been increasingly disputed. Today many women have difficulty accepting an exclusively

God, then why does he allow the innocent to suffer? For centuries this dilemma has been explained by the Book of Job; by the humble acceptance of a personal God's will; by the belief that human understanding is too puny to fathom the inscrutable workings of God. Such philosophical constructs limped along until they hit the wall of the Holocaust. Then the sheer enormity of the evil tossed these nostrums like straws in the wind. Can anyone seriously believe that God was testing six million Jews à la Job? If God can permit such evil, then either he doesn't exist at all, or else he appears helpless to contain evil. If God is helpless, then he's not worth bothering with. With these as the two philosophical alternatives, it's little

The patriarchal nature of traditional Christianity and the patriarchal hierarchy of many Christian churches have also been increasingly disputed.... Moreover, many churches have not been able to come to terms with philosophical questions that lie at the heart of contemporary psychological problems.... Finally, the limitations imposed by the Judeo-Christian worldview have made it difficult to reconcile the findings of science with established religious doctrine.... It speaks well for the resilience of the human spirit that it seeks transcendence against what would seem to be enormous odds. On the other hand, spirituality is the only real thing left to us in the West.

male deity. The ancient Judeo-Christian concept of God as a ruler-king—one who metes out justice and whose wrath one dreads—no longer seems a relevant image in the post-modern world. In times where everything seems transient, unsafe, and unsure, the love and protection of God as mother is meaningful and reassuring. Further, having battled (for the most part, successfully) male domination in the workplace, women will not tolerate it in their place of worship. If they feel their issues and concerns are not being addressed, they will simply walk out. And many have done just that.

Moreover, many churches have not been able to come to terms with philosophical questions that lie at the heart of contemporary psychological problems. If there is a

wonder that despair and a sense of meaninglessness have been the malaise of the post-modern world.

No church has adequately vanquished these twin demons. This is unfortunately inevitable since the Judeo-Christian worldview is strictured by the belief in an exclusively personal God. The problem with an all-merciful and all-good personal God is that it necessitates some explanation for evil. 'You will always find that the idea of a personal God has to carry with it a personal devil,' Swami Vivekananda observed.⁹ Worse, this woefully brief human life which

9. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973), vol. 1, p. 376. [Hereafter CW.]

is continually beset with unexplained sorrow is the be-all and end-all of existence for all time. Such are the hazards of a linear—rather than a cyclical—view of time.

Finally, the limitations imposed by the Judeo-Christian worldview have made it difficult to reconcile the findings of science with established religious doctrine. For the past century the tension between the two antagonists has made people feel that they must choose either the truth of science and objective reasoning or they have to unquestioningly accept church dogma. The former

'I tell it to you with an openness of heart that I doubt I shall ever achieve again, so I pray that you are in a quiet room as you hear these words. My secret is that I need God—that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I no longer seem to be capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love.'

choice leaves humanity in a world bereft of ultimacy; the latter choice creates the refuge of fundamentalism—a choice that is rapidly growing in every culture as an antidote to the confusion of secularism.

It speaks well for the resilience of the human spirit that it seeks transcendence against what would seem to be enormous odds. On the other hand, spirituality is the only real thing left to us in the West.

We had wealth and it gave us goods. We had goods and they gave us the appearance of security. But the security was a cruel hoax and everything that money could buy and the world could offer was not enough to

salve the pain of a hollow life. The haunting truth was that no matter what we had or earned, it was never enough.

The flower children of the 60s became the 'Me Generation' of the 70s. By the 80s they were guarding their investments and by the 90s the gray-haired former hippies were saving for their retirement, staring at their mortality in the mirror. Somewhere in their search for fulfilment, the 60s generation spawned today's youth, a group of 80 million souls frequently referred to as 'Generation X.'

Generation X was the first generation whose majority was raised without the ballast of organized religion and an unbroken home. Between 1965 and 1975 America's divorce rate doubled; a child born in the 60s was three times as likely to live with one parent as a child born in an earlier generation.¹⁰

Growing up with videos and MTV as role models, Generation X found solace in shopping malls and emotional resonance in television. They acquired more things than any earlier generation but were never given the emotional glue that bonds families and communities together.

It should be a bleak picture and in many ways it is. Growing up in a world where nothing could be trusted, nothing could be counted upon, the younger generation has had to encounter life at its most desolate. Yet this very desolation has provided the soil for today's spiritual renewal. 'The crisis of meaning and self-identity has sparked a religious revival,' Princeton University theologian Gibson Winter recently declared.¹¹

10. Neil Howe and Bill Straus, *13th Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), pp. 13, 7.

11. 'America in Search of Its Soul', *Theology Today*, January, 1996, p. 472.

Having found everything that it was given either shallow or trivial, Generation X has increasingly turned to spirituality. God alone, it has discovered, can salvage their lives which have become 'scorched with irony'. Douglas Coupland, Generation X author and its unwilling spokesman, has written:

Now—here is my secret:

I tell it to you with an openness of heart that I doubt I shall ever achieve again, so I pray that you are in a quiet room as you hear these words. My secret is that I need God—that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I no longer seem to be capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love.¹²

Lest we suspect these are only the words of one sole unrepresentative person, we can look at the results of a Gallup poll which assessed the 'six basic needs' of young people in America today. The survey dryly mirrors what the author has already told us. According to this survey, the needs are:

1. The need to believe that life is meaningful and has a purpose;
2. The need for a sense of community and deeper relationships;
3. The need to be appreciated and loved;
4. The need to be listened to—and heard;
5. The need to feel that one is grow-

ing in faith;

6. The need for practical help in developing a mature faith.¹³

As is the youth, so goes the country. If the first need—the need to believe that life is meaningful and purposeful—is met, the rest of the requirements will naturally follow of themselves. Providentially, the 60s generation—perennially stuck on themselves—and their X-Generation children—perennially stuck on fast-forward—have together come to the end of their respective ropes to reach, at long last, the only hope they ever had, a life centred in the Spirit.

How that first need is met is where the 'invisible service' of the North American Vedanta Societies interfaces with North American reality. Our role has consistently been to alleviate spiritual poverty, and in that role our work today is more crucial than ever.

How that first need is met is where the 'invisible service' of the North American Vedanta Societies interfaces with North American reality. Our role has consistently been to alleviate spiritual poverty, and in that role our work today is more crucial than ever. How is spiritual poverty alleviated? By giving the absolute, complete assurance that human life is purposeful, meaningful, a great gift. It is something that should never be trivialized or wasted.

How is spiritual poverty alleviated? By giving the absolute, complete assurance that human life is purposeful, meaningful, a great gift. It is something that should never be trivialized or wasted.

Our life is meaningful because our real nature is divine, and in time we will all fully

12. *Life After God* (New York: Pocket Books, 1994), p. 359.

13. George Gallup, Jr. and Robert Bezilla, *The Religious Life of Young Americans* (Princeton, NJ: The George II Gallup International Institute, 1992), pp. 12-14.

manifest our divinity. Our life is meaningful because we are deeply connected to one another: our actions and thoughts—though initially directed to others—ricochet upon ourselves, and thus any efforts that we make toward unselfishness and compassion will reap rewards in our own spiritual development. Our life is meaningful because our actions bear tangible fruit: We are not pawns in a great chess game that we can never understand. Our actions and our thoughts direct our tomorrows just as our actions and thoughts of yesterday have created our to-days. There is none to blame, none to praise, except our own selves. With this ultimate responsibility comes the strength to change ourselves, for only then can we make positive shifts in the world around us.

For over a century the truth of the divinity of the soul, the oneness of existence, the value of unselfishness and compassion over greed and ignorance and cruelty has gradually sunk into the collective consciousness of this immense land. For a century the message has been spoken and written and discussed in myriad ways, and like a potent acid, it has been etching its way into the hearts and minds of the population.

The work here has never been glamorous. At times it seemed *perfectly* invisible. No one could see the hours spent talking to one human being who had come in search for spiritual truth. No one could see the hours spent working on a lecture that perhaps fifty people would hear. Sometimes it must have seemed like tilling hopelessly barren soil—dirt, weeds, ungrateful stones. But such was never the case. Patience, infinite

patience was required, but the presence of the Ramakrishna Order proved the paradigm of the hereditary farmer who never succumbed to temporary setbacks. Now more than ever, people in ever-increasing numbers are seeking spiritual sustenance from the Vedanta Societies in North America.

It is a lovely serendipity that North America's spiritual resuscitation should coincide with the centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission. And now, as we are poised to enter the third millennium, we are faced with the task of continuing the work we have begun. To quote Douglas Coupland again, 'I remind myself we are living creatures—we have religious impulses—we *must*—and yet into what cracks do these impulses flow in a world without religion?'¹⁴

Our challenge in the North American Vedanta Societies is to be there to fill in those cracks. The world is not so much without religion as a world that doesn't know what real religion *is*. We must be the signpost, the witness, the living testimony that, as Swami Vivekananda said, 'Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization.'¹⁵

That alone will give life meaning. The promise of this realization—available to all of us—is what will fuel our work toward the removal of spiritual poverty. □

14. *Life After God*, pp. 273-4.

15. CW, vol. 4, p. 187.

Devotion to God increases in the same proportion as attachment to sense-objects decreases.

—*Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 131

The Continuing Value of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda to the West

RICHARD R. ERICKSON

In the following piece, Mr. Erickson, of New Jersey, frankly and feelingly narrates his deeply personal gains from the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

There is a Light in the world. Some call it the Holy Spirit; some call it Mother; some call it Tao. It is a refuge from the cold mechanical conception of modern life. It is a guide, comforter and source of wisdom. It is Love, Being, Awareness.

Many in this world are yearning for the Light, but for many who have been 'educated' in the modern way the Light is almost completely inaccessible. The door has been slammed shut for millions of young minds. The Light has been condemned. It is irrational, unproven and worst of all, unscientific. The world, after all, is a cold objective mechanical place; the mind is nothing but a product of chemical processes occurring in the brain. There is no possibility of magic or divinity in this conception and there is no sense of meaning, save for the pursuit of comfort and the avoidance of boredom.

Into this barren desert of the 'educated' heart a plaintiff cry can occasionally be heard. It echoes across the landscape like the wail of a coyote howling in the night. It is the cry for help, the cry for meaning, the cry for love. Luckily our Mother is very compassionate. For those who feel they are lost and adrift, She has provided many guides. The best guide is sitting in our very Heart. Of course, who in the modern world would seek to look for Her there! We have been trained to look for answers outside and our ears are deaf to inner promptings. Fortunately, Mother has accommodated us once

again.

For those with an emotional turn of mind, there are leaders and teachers in abundance. For those with a mystical frame of mind there are meditation techniques and koans to contemplate. But for those with a rational bent of mind, for those who have fallen into the pit of a scientific education, what hope is there for them?

Perhaps the best that I can offer is to relate my own experience. It was in just such a 'pit of education' that I found myself some ten years ago. I had finished my training several years before from the California Institute of Technology, but was troubled and searching for some deeper meaning in life. My groping and rationalization lead me to an interesting view of human behaviour and cognition. It was a view that was both mechanistic and magical. Human behaviour seemed very mechanical, as did all forms of mental functioning, but the very fact of perception seemed to require that everything was marvellously and non-conceptually Self-aware. A series of rational arguments led me to the powerful conclusion that Everything is Mind, and it isn't the things in Mind that matter particularly, but rather the Mind in and by which they appear that is significant. As this realization dawned, I even experienced a momentary sense of Oneness with everything in my field of Awareness. It was truly a neat experience, but what does one do after a realization like

that? What's next?

Luckily a guide appeared. I stumbled across a New Age Center with classes in meditation and an instructor who introduced me to the writings of Vivekananda. It was through the words and powerful intellect of Swamiji that I was able to open the door that had been shut so firmly in my teens. Swamiji was truly the guide I had so dearly needed.

The rational thinkers of the modern world need rational arguments to reveal the deficiencies of their education and world-view. It takes a giant like Vivekananda to pull off the blinders even for an instant and make them question what they have been trained to see and not-see. Across the span of 100 years, Vivekananda is still planting

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seeds in the soil of desert hearts, and those hearts are blooming desert flowers and becoming green. There are few teachers who can rival the eloquence and efficacy of Swamiji's teachings to the West. He truly embodies a very rare and precious species of Mother's many guides.

It is only after Vivekananda has blasted away the blinders of an 'educated' soul that such a soul stands a chance of perceiving the glory of Ramakrishna Himself. Before that, how could he or she even entertain the concept of an Avatar? Through Ramakrishna, across the span of a century, comes teaching and comfort as warm and fresh as any avail-

able today. Through Mother's power, He speaks to us across the years and across the distance separating the West from India.

For example, in asking for guidance in writing this piece, I opened the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* exactly to the following passage:

MASTER (to Vijay): The task of a religious teacher is indeed difficult. One cannot teach men without a direct command from God. People won't listen to you if you teach without such authority. Such teaching has no force behind it. One must first of all attain God through spiritual discipline or some other means. Thus armed with authority from God, one can deliver lectures.... How is it ever possible for one man to liberate another from the bondage of the world? God alone, the Creator of this world-bewitching maya, can save men from maya. There is no other refuge but that great Teacher, Satchidananda. How is it ever possible for men who have not realized God or received His command, and who are not strengthened with divine strength, to save others from the prison-house of the world?

One day as I was passing the Panchavati on my way to the pine-grove, I heard a bullfrog croaking. I thought it must have been seized by a snake. After some time, as I was coming back, I could still hear its terrified croaking. I looked to see what was the matter, and found that a water snake had seized it. The snake could neither swallow it nor give it up. So there was no end to the frog's suffering. I thought that had it been seized by a cobra it would have been silenced after three croaks at the most. As it was only a water snake, both of them had to go through this agony. A man's ego is destroyed after three croaks, as it were, if he gets into the clutches of a real teacher. But

if the teacher is an 'unripe' one, then both the teacher and the disciple undergo endless suffering. The disciple cannot get rid either of his ego or of the shackles of the world. If a disciple falls into the clutches of an incompetent teacher, he doesn't attain liberation.¹

Teachings, this fresh and meaningful, from a man whom science would say is no longer

with us! There indeed was a Cobra in Ramakrishna, like Shiva Himself.

I can do little more than relate my own experience and express gratitude on this centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission. That gratitude goes to Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and the many monks and seekers who have kept their teachings alive. Finally, let us all be grateful to Mother who has provided us with these Guides and who has made all things possible. Thank You, Mother. May Your Peace come quickly to all troubled minds. Amen. □

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1942), pp. 225-6.



Mr. Goodwin

Back to the Source

RESINA PHAFF

Mrs. Phaff, of London, a deeply devoted Christian Vedantin for the last 30 years or more, shares her memories of how she came to Sri Ramakrishna, rather, to use her words, how she 'was caught by the Master'. She is pretty aged now, for she says she is at the 'sun-set of one's life', but we would like to quote her own reassuring observation: 'God's devotees have nothing to fear.' There is no 'sun-set' for God's devotees.

Books, articles, essays and reams of discourses have been written and published about Swami Vivekananda's life and his performance at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago and about the message he conveyed and his work in general.

It would therefore be presumptuous and a hopeless task to try and express an opinion or to assess his achievements. Swamiji himself has said repeatedly that whatever words came from his lips, which did any good, came from his Master. He would not take credit for it nor praise; he would take only blame, if anything.

The only way to express one's appreciation and admiration of the illustrious personage Swamiji was, is to explain how it all came about in my life that I found the Master, Sri Ramakrishna, the origin and the source, as it were, of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda.

We all know or have experienced in one way or another that Thakur, the Master, has a way to make himself known to one who is seeking. We may not be aware of his existence, but we are longing for God and trying to find out what life is all about. Then all of a sudden destiny confronts us with Vedanta and unavoidably with Sri Ramakrishna.

The story goes as follows and takes place in London, U.K., end 1969, 1970. I had become a widow and after having gone through many trials and tribulations and having received plenty of knocks in life, this person happens to come across a book

which set the ball rolling. Much earlier one had read *Vedanta for East and West* by Christopher Isherwood; first sign, but no click.

The book in question, by a certain Italian prince, Lanza del Vasco, was in French with the title *A l'Origine des Sources*. It deals with his pilgrimage to the origin of the Ganges in the Himalayas, a fascinating story which ends with a sojourn of the writer in one of Mahatma Gandhi's Ashramas in India. He becomes a disciple of Gandhiji and receives the name Shantidas. From there he feels a vocation to set up his own ashram in the South of France along the same lines.

The coincidence arose when this seeker in question tried to investigate, after reading the book, where the ashram in France is located. After a telephone call with the Indian High Commission in London, the advice was given to try the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Holland Park, London, which was duly contacted. After that first memorable visit to the Centre, there was no more question about going to the South of France. Instead from then on the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre exerted an irresistible attraction and provided answers to many questions, which was the beginning of an association up to the present day.

It is an advantage to start the life of a spiritual aspirant being as ignorant as a baby as far as the subtle truths of the scriptures are concerned. One does not know how to formulate one's feelings and is searching for answers concerning God. One has been

raised in a righteous God-fearing family in the Netherlands and has been going to Sunday school and Catechism as a child and later on to church on Sundays—was not a 'must', but it was done in a small-town society. So one arrived with a Dutch Reformed Protestant background. When one is first confronted with Vedantic thinking, one begins to see the light; the blinkers fall from one's eyes gradually, and one begins to wonder how it is possible that I have not come across this wonderful thinking before—these words of wisdom which convey a feeling of having found, though late in life, 'the Truth'. This is another trick of the Master; he will only make himself known when you are ready for him! The amazing thing about Vedantic thinking is that one begins

and after that one becomes a regular visitor to the Sunday lectures at the Centre and the monthly readings of the life of the Holy Mother. Much benefit is derived and one is now on the right track.

In the meantime the birthday celebration of Sri Ramakrishna is approaching and one is asked to attend the puja. With anticipation the function is being attended together with many visitors and, to one's amazement, when at the end of the Puja all visitors kneeled and offered a flower at the altar and the image of Sri Ramakrishna, this newcomer followed their example and felt blessed to have been there for that important event. The Swami read in an emotional voice from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. It was an unforgettable evening.

It became a regular habit during the following months and years to go to the Centre for *ārati* when possible. On many instances questions were being asked and many doubts and wrong thinking were set right through the patient and gentle understanding attitude of the Swami. The teacher is the mouthpiece of Sri Ramakrishna and, without the instructions and guidance so generously given, one would not be able to make any progress.

Looking back, it had been Sri Ramakrishna's power in a subtle way that a person with a Christian background and not acquainted with Hindu thought begins to see him as God personified and develops devotion and faith in him.

The regular practice of meditation proves a blessing and brings peace and joy, but not until many of the old *samskāras* are overcome and the mind begins to be one-pointed after years of practice. More than anything else it is the spirit of loving acceptance and understanding by the Swami which brings about a complete change in one's thinking.

One begins to understand why all the direct disciples of the Master declared that he was the only one who knew to love with

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to understand that there is in every person, whether he or she is aware of it or not, a yearning for the highest, the Reality, and the urge to find it, without being aware that it can be found within oneself.

The aspirant has by now been caught by the Master and he will not let go. One is determined to find out all one can that will bring one closer to the 'source', as it were.

One would like to ask questions but one is hesitant to approach a teacher like the Swami-in-charge, for fear of appearing too ignorant and plain stupid.

After some hesitant questioning during the first interview, the Swami has put one at ease and one does not feel such an intruder any longer. Some literature is recommended

pure disinterested love, not asking for anything in return. This is the love one experiences on having had the good fortune of finding the teacher who conveys everything Sri Ramakrishna teaches. The path of work combined with spiritual practices in harmonious combination is being recommended. The path towards the top of the mountain and the origin of the source has to go through the valley.

This reminds me: after graduating from school (1937), my younger brother, who was a student of Delft University, and myself undertook a trip to Switzerland. We had spent a year in Ascona in our childhood with

now, as well as visiting again the 'Madonna del Sasso' (the Virgin on the Rock) on the mountain near Ascona. Which brings me back to the present.

I understand the teachings of Jesus Christ better now and I have actually realized in my own mind that Christ dwells in Sri Ramakrishna in subtle form and makes himself known to a sincere seeker.

The greatest impact of Vedantic teachings came from reading the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. I read, right at the start, the first six volumes from cover to cover, and not only that—the pencil markings on the margin and the underlinings in each volume bear witness; my teacher used to say, one must underline while reading whatever makes an impact or rings a bell in one's mind; that is the way to read in depth.

Over the years many admonitions and valuable help in spiritual matters have been given to me by my teacher and have been conducive to the unfoldment of positive thinking. The grace and blessings of the guru are immensely beneficial and cannot be evaluated, let alone made up for in one lifetime in service and *sādhana*. I had the good fortune of having been able to serve my teacher for nearly 24 years from the start of his arrival in the U.K. as head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in London till his demise in 1993. It is said in the *Gospel* that

The amazing thing about Vedantic thinking is that one begins to understand that there is in every person, whether he or she is aware of it or not, a yearning for the highest, the Reality, and the urge to find it, without being aware that it can be found within oneself.

our mother; hence this journey. We drove in his Model T-Ford (convertible) all the way to the Swiss Alps, where we ascended the Gotthard mountain-pass by car and saw the origin of the river Rhine, which ends in the Netherlands in a branched-out estuary. It was an event still fresh in my mind even



**Vedanta Conference, June 1993
The Netherlands**

*L to R. Swamis Tripurananda,
Vidyatmananda,
Bhashyananda,
Veetamohananda,
Dayatmananda*

God's devotees have nothing to fear. They are His own; He stands always with them. Equally the guru does not abandon his disciple. It is an eternal relationship.

In 1977, the Vedanta Centre was transferred from London to a spacious country house with 10 acres of land in Buckinghamshire, about 25 miles from London in the direction of Oxford. It was a move which benefited the Swamis and monastic brothers, but was deplored by many devotees, who faced a long journey to be able to derive the benefit from visiting the shrineroom.

I have been travelling three times a week for nearly fifteen years up and down M-40, the motorway to Oxford. I was able to do service to the Swami, such as preparing his food and taking care of other chores, since by that time I had retired from work.

I also took time off to make a pilgrimage to India; I travelled by train the length of India from Shillong, in Assam, to Kanyakumari and the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, after spending a few weeks at the Belur Math. On a previous visit to India I had been to Benares, Vrindaban and Rishikesh as well as visiting the important places of pilgrimage connected with the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother.

Moreover I spent a few years in the United States and visited the Vedanta Societies on the Westcoast and in Chicago.

In 1993, the Year of Interreligious Understanding and Cooperation began in London with a celebration in honour of Swami Vivekananda at the 'Global Co-operation House', an international centre of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University. It has an auditorium, seating 700; all seats were taken during the day-programme which featured worship and addresses by representatives of nine participating faiths; a large photo of Swami Vivekananda in the background and the cultural activities in the afternoon and evening turned out to make it an 'uplifting event', in the words of Lord Ennals, chairman of the

occasion. The speakers included Swami Bhavyananda of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Bishop Huddleston from South Africa (anti-apartheid), Astronaut Edgar Mitchell from the USA (who declared that he and his co-astronauts went on their moon-landing mission as technicians and returned as humanists), and many others.

The following event was a gala-celebration in honour of Swami Vivekananda at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in London. The Executive Director, Sri Mathoor Krishnamur-

I understand the teachings of Jesus Christ better now and I have actually realized in my own mind that Christ dwells in Sri Ramakrishna in subtle form and makes himself known to a sincere seeker.

thy, introduced the panel: Swami Bhavyananda, who chaired the event; His Excellency Dr. Singhvi, High Commissioner for India; Swami Vidyatmananda of the Centre in France; Swami Dayatmananda, U.K.; and the Roman Catholic Bishop C.J. Henderson, inter-religious mediator for England. The auditorium was filled to capacity, and all addresses, also by some devotees, were highly appreciated and were aimed at highlighting the life and ideals of Swami Vivekananda, who surveyed the proceedings from his easel, our favourite painting done by a gifted *brahmachari* years ago.

After a break for lunch, a cultural programme of *bhajans* and dance took place, performed with wit and good taste.

In June 1993, we celebrated the first European Vedanta Conference which was held to commemorate the centenary of the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago. It took place in the Netherlands and coincided with the dedication and inauguration of the newly established Vedanta Centre in the Netherlands, at the outskirts of Amsterdam, known as the 'Ramakrishna

Vedanta Vereniging Nederland'. The group of about 50 devotees from Britain arrived at the Airport near Amsterdam and were taken by coach to the newly acquired building where they were welcomed by Swami Chidbhasananda, the Swami-in-charge.

The dedication ceremony was performed by Swami Bhavyananda, and we spent about an hour at the Centre listening to *bhajans*, having *prasad* and meeting devotees. At 3 pm the coach took us about 150 km southwards to the province of Brabant where a spacious conference house accommodated the participants, about 150 in all, from France, Germany, Greece, besides the English contingent. We had the good fortune to have seven swamis of the Order in

The speakers included Swami Bhavyananda of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Bishop Huddleston from South Africa (anti-apartheid), Astronaut Edgar Mitchell from the USA (who declared that he and his co-astronauts went on their moon-landing mission as technicians and returned as humanists), and many others.

our midst. During the week-end's sojourn we enjoyed listening to talks given by the swamis and more over by several devotees and delegates. The programme turned out to be very stimulating and created a spiritual atmosphere, enhanced by the large painting of Swami Vivekananda in the background.

Meditation was held early in the morning, but for the rest of the day there was not much opportunity to practise silence since all the participants tended either to sing together or make new acquaintances, or participate in group-discussions. We enjoyed a concert of flute and harpsichord performed by two Dutch devotees..

On Sunday morning the final session took place, and after the midday-meal we started on the return journey.

Sri Ramakrishna had showered his blessings on the Conference and Swamiji found a place in the hearts of the participants. The newly established Centre can pride itself in having become the first centre to have organized an international Vedanta seminar in Europe. Hopefully more will follow.

After these events Swami Bhavyananda's health began to deteriorate rapidly towards the end of the year. In spite of the best medical attention and care, Swamiji passed away in December 1993. Sri Ramakrishna and Mother called him and he left us.

At the sun-set of one's life, there is not much more to do than remember and meditate on the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, keeping an eye on the 'source' where He is 'waiting'.

In my shrineroom Thakur watches over me and occasionally we get together with devotees at the Centre during special *Pujas*.

It is the only way!

If you go below the surface, you find that Unity between man and man, between races and races, high and low, rich and poor, gods and men, and men and animals. If you go deep enough, all will be seen as only variations of the One, and he who has attained to this conception of Oneness, has no more delusion.... He has traced the reality of everything to the Lord, the Centre, the Unity of everything, and that is Eternal Existence, Eternal Knowledge, Eternal Bliss.

—Swami Vivekananda

Story of the Two Birds

SWAMI SHUDDHARUPANANDA

The Mundaka-Upanishad teaches that the jiva, soul, through its attachment to the world, performs good and evil actions and consequently gets the body of an angel, human, or beast, etc. in its subsequent births. In some later birth as a human, due to the results of virtuous actions such as worship, devotion and charity, performed in a previous birth, it develops a longing for permanent joy and peace, and approaches a compassionate spiritual Teacher who knows the way—the path of Yoga. After learning Yoga and practising its moral and spiritual disciplines, the jiva is able to fix its mind on God, meditate on Him and, finally by His grace, have His visions and realize itself as essentially one with Him who is eternal Peace and Joy.

The author, a member of our Order residing at Belur Math, puts into charming poetry the above sublime Upanishadic ideas.

Hear the story!
Of the glory,

Live, two birds of same name, on the same tree,
One attached, other free.

Jiva
And Shiva.

One sits calm and high,
Other hops restless, sits low with a sigh.

One is unperturbed and cool,
Other has pain and pleasure pull.

One eats no fruit,
Other eats sweet and sour fruit,
Joy and misery to suit.

Alternates — Happy
 Sorry
 Glad
 Sad

Low bird, in a bad plight,
One day sees light.

Hope descends,
Spirit ascends,

Faith increases,
 Doubt decreases,
 Grows in strength,
 All along the length.

What light?
 Teacher in sight.

Meets compassionate Teacher,
 Inside grows richer.

Teacher outside
 Teacher inside

Inside — Hears
 Ponders
 Thinks
 In meditation sinks

Big hurdle
 Keeps the struggle

Keeps on
 On and on

With vigilance,
 Perseverance

High price
 Precious prize

What happens?

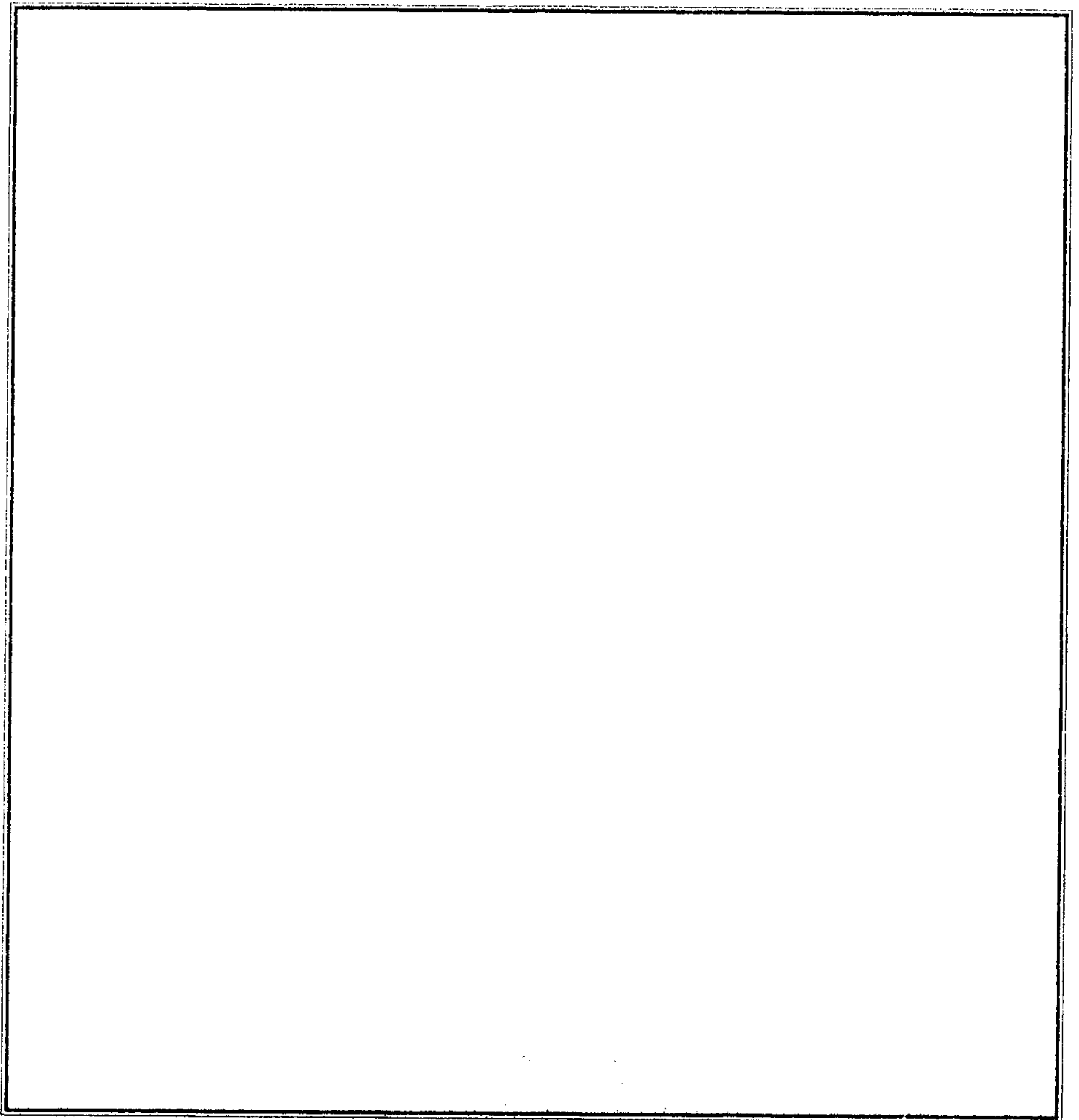
Lock
 Unlock
 Gates open wide
 Light inside
 Enters Divine
 In the heart's shrine

Comes — Calmness
 Happiness
 Soothing
 Fulfilling
 Joy of Joy
 Untold Joy

Love abounds
gets bound
Low bird
Sees and loves high bird

Moves up
Closes up

Jiva
Identifies Shiva
All is Shiva
Two Birds
Become one Bird. □



Reviews and Notices

THE STORY OF THE VIVEKANANDA ROCK MEMORIAL: By Eknath Ranade; publ. Vivekananda Kendra Prakashana Trust, 3 Singarachari Street, Triplicane, Madras 600 005; 1995; pp. 161 + xv; Rs. 36/-.

For centuries the mighty Himalayas have stood as a symbol of all that is grand and glorious in Indian spirituality. After Swami Vivekananda, renascent India has been given another symbol—this time set amid swirling seas—representing the other aspect of her spirituality that is full of vigour and vitality. Centuries ago, Siddhartha Gautama sat in meditation under a Bo tree, and discovered the way out of human misery. He was called The Awakened, and the spot has become a place of pilgrimage. And only a century ago, Swami Vivekananda sat in meditation 'on that last bit of Indian rock', and discovered the solution to the problems of a nation. People are calling him The Awakener, and that spot too has become a place of pilgrimage.

This is the story of how a monument was built on that 'last bit of Indian rock', to a man who has come to mean so much to us all. But consecrating a temple in honour of Swami Vivekananda, on a place which he sanctified, was not easy. In this small book of ten loosely strung chapters, Sri Eknath Ranade, the man behind the whole achievement, relates the tale of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial at Kanyakumari in his own plain and open style. The project had without doubt the assured support of all of those who were told about it, but Eknathji had to do the difficult work of getting the people at large to appreciate the magnitude of Swamiji's contribution, overcome the active opposition and hostility of a section of the local population, persuade patrons-to-be, and convince people in the government about the urgency of the entire undertaking. Anyone who has done any public work cannot but admire Eknathji's story.

Those who wish to succeed in an enterprise of this kind are expected to have certain qualities to a degree well above average. Eknathji had all these. It is needless to say that he was very sincere and enthusiastic. He was meticulous in whatever he did and was an able organizer. These qualities attracted to him a number of selfless life-workers. He possessed two more qualities which this

reviewer thinks special: one was his utter unwillingness to mix up the VRM programme with politics, and the other his remarkable vision. Nothing is wrong with politics, but what is usually made of politics wrecks everything. Having seen a lot of politics before becoming the Organizing Secretary of the VRM Committee, he could imagine the damage petty politicking could do to the work which he held sacred. So while soliciting politicians for their co-operation, he made it a point to approach them without prejudice and appeal to the Indian in them. This attitude was reciprocated by encouragement from all political parties, which no amount of adroitness could have secured.

During his highly active life Eknathji had acquired much wisdom and foresight. Building a granite structure is not everything. He believed that there had to be an organization of devoted people who could actualize his ideas—otherwise they (ideas) would simply not be worthwhile however noble they were. The now famous Vivekananda Kendra is the tangible evidence of Eknathji's vision. By founding this organization, Eknathji has left behind a group of people to continue the great work of national service that he initiated. Unfortunately, the book contains very little about the Vivekananda Kendra. For an organization which is supposed to be the 'second phase' of the VRM project, it would not have been beyond the scope of the book to include a few more chapters on the Kendra, detailing its work in the field of education, rural development and natural resource development. After all it is the Vivekananda Kendra which has been doing the real work for over twenty-five years.

Be that as it may, after going through the *Story* one has to admit that Eknathji had imbibed to a large extent the spirit of Swami Vivekananda's instructions about nation-building. Indeed, to go to Kanyakumari is to be inspired to serve India.

Swami Bhasvatananda, Belur Math

CONTEMPLATING SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: By M. Sivaramkrishna; Ark Bird Publications, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh 500 001; 1995; pp. 126; Rs. 25/-.

This slender volume is a put-together of brief but very original discourses by a scholar whose

interests extend from scriptures to linguistics, and from psychology to religion. Is it possible to apply to Swami Vivekananda's teachings, which belong to a genre of their own, an interpretative framework obtained from a different tradition? Prof. Sivaramkrishna's deep absorption in this topical question leads him to consider the views of such thinkers as David Bohm and reflect on the interfusion of cultures to which he is witness. While appropriating the rich area of Swami Vivekananda's thoughts, the learned Professor also pays him the tribute of retrieval and rethinking. And this he has done with the admirable ability and bifocal vision of an intellectual well-informed about both Swamiji and the hermeneutic approach; one who has himself felt the urgency of interpreting in current idiom, and yet in the light of concepts and insights rooted in the distant past. The seminal character of the book is evident all through.

Swami Bhasvatananda

HINDU SPIRITUALITY: VEDAS THROUGH VEDANTA; ed. Prof. Krishna Sivaraman; publ. Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110 007; 1995; pp. 447; Rs. 198/-.

This book, which appears as part of a series entitled *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, seeks to present in a concise form an eminently readable compilation of some of the most vigorous essays on the eternal, timeless dimension of Hinduism. These writings are drawn—in the words of the publisher—from 'the highest level of scholarship around the world'. They attempt an approach to spirituality mainly on the basis of religious life and thought through various texts and their conflicting interpretations, acclaimed alike as authoritative and diversified, on the intellectual and spiritual traditions and philosophies of India.

As the first Hindu volume in the *World Spirituality* series, it brings together the complex profiles on thought, belief and practice beginning with their development from the Vedic period to their early crystallization as Vedanta, 'the end of the Veda'. Within its ambit, it has covered the entire gamut, with the notable exception of Buddhism, which has been treated in separate volumes, of what is known as 'classical' period of Hinduism, including an article on Jainism. The accent, as the name of the book implies, is naturally on spirituality rather than on objective as-

pects of religion and culture.

In its attempt to present a synchronic picture of Hindu spiritual development over a period covering more than two millenia, the topics in this volume have been treated in eight parts.

Part 1, entitled 'The Vedic Spirit', contains articles ranging from the vision of the Vedic seers concerning mysteries of the world of spirit to the wisdom of the sages of the Upanishads. Part 2 analyses 'The Spiritual Horizon of Dharma', in which the spiritual foundations of Indian social order through caste system, the eternal message of the epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, have been discussed in three thought-provoking essays. Part 3 addresses the 'Sramanic Spirituality' in the article entitled 'The Jaina Spirit and Spirituality'. It provides the reader with a comprehensive account of the various outstanding features of the Jaina religion. Part 4, 'The Spiritual Quest for Immortality and Freedom', is devoted to three areas of yogic disciplines, namely: the body-behavioural yoga (i.e. the yoga of human action), the yoga of Patanjali, and the yoga of speech. 'Vedanta as Reflective Spirituality' is the title of Part 5. It spans in extent and importance the earlier and later spiritual orientations.

The life of devotion (bhakti) forms the subject matter of Part 6 entitled 'Vedanta as Devotion'. It includes three essays on the major traditions of Vedanta interpreted as devotional theism. 'Spirituality and Human Life' is the heading of Part 7. It explores the spiritual aspects of human life in relation to nature, art, music, health and human welfare. Two of these, namely, nature and health, are treated in this volume, leaving the rest to be dealt with in the next volume. The question—can the spirit of the Veda and Vedanta in its pristine quality be said to be a living experience today?—meets with a positive, soul-stirring answer in the final part, called 'Contemporary Expression of the Classical Spirit'. It focusses on exemplars of the classical spirit in the days since the time of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

We learn from the Editor that the next volume which, incidentally, will feature a paper on Sri Ramakrishna, will attempt to meet the requirements of those interested in post-classical developments of Hindu spirituality. Judging by the standards set by the present book, one is encouraged to look forward to the next volume.

Neatly and faultlessly printed, the book comes with interesting photographs. Readers will find handy the general bibliography and abbreviations section, the scheme of transliteration, glossary and indices.

*Arnab Ganguli
Calcutta*

SONIC THEOLOGY (*Hinduism and Sacred Sound*): By Guy L. Beck; publ. Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007; 1995; pp. 290; Rs. 195/-.

Sonic Theology is an inevitable outcome of the author's profound study of Indian classical music and Hindu religious texts. The study of music led him to believe that musical notes must have, apart from the quality of pleasing the ears, some deeper purpose. He also found that music forms an integral part of many religions in the world. He thus tried to trace the interrelations between letter and word, between sound and its meaning, and of these with the ultimate Reality. This led him deeper into the subject. But then, he limited his studies to the concept of sound as described in the Vedas, in Indian philosophies of language, and in a few religious sects of Hinduism. His choice of restricting his studies only to Hindu sects was due to the fact that Hinduism has assigned a significant place to the primordial sound *Om*. Almost all the sects in Hinduism venerate this sound and include it in their philosophies.

The author introduces the concept of *vāk*, or articulate utterance, which is referred to in the *Rg-Veda* and traces the development of this concept through the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṇyakas* and *Upaniṣads*. A reference is made to *abhirīya-vāk*, i.e., thunder, and also to the quadruple division of *vāk*. The entire universe is permeated by *vāk*, or vocal energy, but only the fourth division plays its role in human communication. The other three divisions are the spheres of spiritual quest. Thus the *vāk* is also the underlying language of nature, in which the sounds of beasts, birds, amphibians and even of inanimate objects participate.

In the chapter on Indian Philosophies of Language, the author makes a distinction between the *Mīmāṃsakas* and the *Grammarians*. The controversy between '*Sphoṭavāda*' and '*Varna-vāda*' is discussed at sufficient length. Views of Patañjali and of Jain *Āchāryas* as also of Buddhist monks on the problem of language are studied and made clearer by the author. Similarly, *Āchārya Śaṅkara's* views on '*Sphoṭa*' as are traceable in his *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya* are referred to. Vedānta views 'sound' from a different angle. The Truth which is Brahman is best comprehended by the Vedantist in 'utter silence'.

These two chapters are enough to set the reader on the path of spiritual harmony, and would lead him from external sound to internal sound, and to primordial silence.

The more inquisitive readers would find the chapter on *Nāda-Yoga* extremely interesting and rewarding. Here, Patañjali is discussed again in greater details along with the extant twenty-one *Yoga-Upaniṣads*. The place of *Nāda* in various Yogic practices is mentioned. This is followed by teachings and practices of Goraknāth and the other *yogis* of that order. Goraknath's instructions for concentrating on '*Dhum-Dhum-kāra-Nāda*' would catch the reader's attention. According to Goraknath, this *Nāda* is pure self-revelation of Śiva-Śakti in sound-form. The author adds a few more pages here on the concept of *Nāda-Yoga* in Indian music, and describes current trends in this Yoga introduced by various savants in the field including Acharya Rajnish.

Part 2 of the book deals with '*Nāda-Brahman as Female Energy*'. This part consists of three chapters, on *Śākta-Tantra*, *Śaivism*, and *Vaiṣṇavism*, respectively. The author has drawn heavily on *Āgama* literature of both the sects. Kashmir *Śaivism* is based on the philosophy of *Trika*, or Triadism, in the terms of Western scholars. *Vāk* as a form of female energy is none else but *Śrī-Vidyā* or Goddess *Kālī* of the *Śākta-Tantras*. The same concept is adopted in *Śaivism* and *Vaiṣṇavism*, where the divine consorts, viz. *Umā* and *Śrī*, are said to be the concrete forms of Sound-Energy of Śiva and Viṣṇu, respectively.

As mentioned by the author, the major objective of this work has been to evaluate the variety of Hindu sectarian developments in terms of adoption of similar configuration of the sacred sound in these sects (p. 209). It seems that the author has achieved his objective to a large extent. It is strange, however, that the book does not contain a chapter on Indian Music as a way of worship of *Nāda-Brahman*. The book otherwise contains a fund of information, and a serious reader of Hinduism may advantageously go through these pages. Paper, printing and get-up are excellent.

Dr. Narendranath B. Patil, Mumbai

CHINNAMASTĀ: By Elisabeth Anne Benard; publ. Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007; 1994; pp. 162 + xiv; Rs. 145/-.

The book is a comparative study of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions in respect of the 'Goddess with the Severed-Head', called *Chinnamastā* in the Hindu Tantric tradition and *Chinnamundā* in the Buddhist Tantric tradition. The

first thing that strikes this reviewer as remarkable is the ability of Elisabeth Anne Benard to break the mental barrier of a Westerner and shed light on the significance of a Goddess whose image is so terrible and terrifying in the first instance to a Westerner.

Unlike Radhakamal Mukerjee, who in his *Cosmic Art of India* categorized Chinnamastā under the terrible *rasa*, Elisabeth Benard considers her image as awe-inspiring, wondrous, or marvellous. In this respect she finds herself in agreement with Rudolph Otto, who in his *The Idea of the Holy* characterized Chinnamastā as *adblunta*, which Elisabeth Benard translates as 'marvellous'. This translation at once shows her respectful bent of mind towards the Hindu/Buddhist Tantric tradition in general, and Chinnamastā/Chinnamundā in particular. She considers Chinnamastā as 'the Tantric goddess *par excellence* because she represents the essential instrument and method of achieving liberation through the Tantric-Yogic process of the manipulation of the subtle winds coursing through the subtle channels'. The quoted lines represent the central thesis of Elisabeth Benard about Chinnamastā. If Tantra means using the body as the principal instrument of liberation, and liberation means the realization that the *duality* of ordinary reality is only a delusion and that there is *only one existence* pervading all that is manifest in this world, then that is all that the image or icon of Chinnamastā symbolizes.

What do we find in the image of Chinnamastā? We see that the Goddess is holding her own severed head in her left hand, drinking her own blood from the central channel, and her two attendants, standing on the left and right sides of her, drinking blood streaming from the left and right channels, respectively. Apparently horrifying, the Goddess and her two attendants symbolize the three principal subtle channels (*nadis*), one central and two ancillary ones of the subtle body.

According to the Tantric traditions, both Hindu and Buddhist, so long as the winds (*prāṇa*) circulate only in the two ancillary channels, and do not find entry into the central channel by overcoming the knots which lie at the entrance of the central channel, one experiences the duality of ordinary reality. This is the case with most people, and the two attendants of Chinnamastā represent them. It is only by *yogic* methods that the knots blocking the entry to the central channel are untied. With the opening of the central channel and the consequent entry of the subtle wind into the central channel, one experiences the collapse of duality, i.e. realizes the *oneness* of ultimate reality. This central thesis about the significance of Chinnamastā is put by Elisabeth

Benard in the following words:

I would argue that Chinnamastā anthropomorphically represents this central channel, her two attendants represent the two ancillary subtle channels.... Moreover, there are three bloodstreams, and if correctly depicted the right bloodstream enters the right attendant's mouth, the left bloodstream the left attendant's mouth, and the central one is drunk by Chinnamastā. Since the attendants drink only from the right or left, respectively, this indicates that they do not know the yogic process of manipulating the winds into the central channel. They experience the duality of ordinary reality. In contrast, Chinnamastā, a great yogini, drinks her own blood from the central channel, thereby experiencing the collapse of duality.

Chinnamastā, as the one central indivisible ultimate reality, is the sacrifice, the sacrificer and the recipient of sacrifice—all in one—and it is only the realization of this truth through the Tantric-Yogic process that brings about the liberation of beings. When the Hindu Tantric conceptualizes thus, and the Buddhist Tantric pays homage to Chinnamundā Vajravārāhī as the giver of realization to this effect that the offer, the offering, and the recipient of the offering do not ultimately exist, we find a point where the two traditions meet with each other. There are, of course, differences in detail as to the rituals etc. of worship. Elisabeth Benard duly takes note of these differences, but very pertinently points out the commonality of the two traditions side by side with their exclusivity in certain areas. Hers is a study in comparison and contrast of Hinduism and Buddhism in respect of rituals, names, forms, symbolism and *sādhana*s (spiritual practices) of Chinnamastā. She has taken equal pains in translating the entire Hindu '*Chinnamastātantra*' from the *Śākta-Pramoda*, and the Buddhist *Chinnamundā-Vajravārāhī-sādhana* and *Trikāyavajrayoginī-Stuti*. The first ever English translation of these sections of the Hindu and Buddhist texts deserves commendation.

The book answers the following questions: Who is Chinnamastā? What is her origin? What does she symbolize? What teaching does she 'convey'? Apart from these, the book provides a most interesting classification of both one hundred eight and one thousand names of Chinnamastā by using the criterion of nine *rasas* of the Hindu *nāṭya-śāstra*. The author's conclusion is that the 'category of marvellous represents Chinnamastā accurately' (p. 140), and one cannot but be fascinated by this conclusion.

The book is exquisitely printed and profitably readable. A very welcome contribution, it is fulfilling at once to intellectuals and spiritual

seekers. Our libraries would be richer by the acquiring of the book.

*Dr. Anil Baran Ray
Burdwan, West Bengal*

THE GENESIS OF THE RAMAKRISHNA ORDER—BARANAGORE MATH: By Swami Vimalatmananda; publ. Baranagore Math Samrakshan Samiti, 125/1 Pramanik Ghat Road, Calcutta 700 036; 1991; pp. 68; Rs. 15/-.

The founding of the Baranagore Math forms an important and impressive chapter in the history of the Ramakrishna Order. It was here, in a dilapidated house rumoured to be haunted by ghosts that the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, charged with an intense spirit of renunciation, banded themselves into a brotherhood under the leadership of Narendranath, the future Swami Vivekananda, just after the passing away of the Master.

The life that they led here was a saga of intense renunciation and awesome austerity undertaken amidst severe privations. Not knowing (and not minding) whether they would get a meal a day, with only one pair of clothes to share among them, the inmates faced ridicule and humiliation from their neighbours. But they remained steadfast in their efforts to achieve the spiritual goal, which was nothing less than God-realization. Many a time the traditional monk in them would urge them to forge out alone; but they would always return, for the strong cord of love of Sri Ramakrishna would keep them all together—a love that continues to hold the succeeding generation of monks together.

The events that took place in the six years (particularly in the first four) of the Baranagore Math have been described in some extent in the *Life of Swami Vivekananda*, in the post-Sri Ramakrishna chapters of *The Gospel*, and in the *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission* by Swami Gambhirananda. The building itself, for reasons unknown, was either forgotten or ignored, till very recently when the residents of Baranagore formed a Society for the preservation of the building premises. What remained, by then, were only two crumbling pillars at the entrance. Upon the request of the Society, Swami Vimalatmananda had painstakingly gathered the available information and written the small book under review.

It describes the events leading to the founding of the Math, the wretched condition of the

monastery building, the intense spiritual practices of the monks, and some of the discussion and arguments they had among themselves. The history of the founding of a religious or spiritual order has perhaps not been so vividly recorded before. As such this book is noteworthy.

Originally published in Bengali in 1986, the book has now been translated into English. Hopefully it will in time be read by all the admirers and supporters of the Ramakrishna Movement. It also contains some delightful bits of information which might be new to general readers, such as that the practice of addressing the monks of the Order as 'Maharaj' was first started by Swami Sadananda, that once the Holy Mother visited the Math, that the neighbours once mistook Swami Saradananda's voice to be that of a young woman, and so on. We also learn that the residents of Baranagore mockingly referred to the inmates of the early Math as 'Ram Christians'—and, why not? Were they not the worthy disciples of a Master who subsumed into himself all religious paths?

The narrative, however, ends abruptly. A small section of the last days at Baranagore and the shifting of the Math to Alambazar would have made it more complete. We wish that in future editions greater care is given to the translation also.

*Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao
Hyderabad*

VEDIC MARRIAGE CEREMONY (Original in Gujarati): By Dr. Dolarrai Mankad; trans. and publ. Tarlika Acharya, Plots, 13-14, 'Mahimna', Dharampur Road, Valsad, Gujarat 396 001; 1996; pp. 22; Rs. 35/-.

In Hindu tradition, marriage is considered as the union of two souls, and our ancestors performed this ceremony with Vedic rites and rituals signifying its sanctity and holiness. But in modern times, it has become a show of prosperity and vulgarity. Therefore this small booklet may be great help today for those who wish to reintroduce our ancient wisdom into the ceremony.

This booklet was originally written in Gujarati by the late Dr. Dolarrai Mankad. Translated into English by his daughter, Dr. Tarlika Acharya, it contains a revised presentation of the Vedic marriage rites, keeping intact their ancient ideas and the associated solemnity.

The marriage rituals—from parental consent

to the farewell given to the bride—are presented step by step in Sanskrit verses with their English translation. The appendix contains those very Sanskrit verses with their English transliteration.

In a nutshell, the lofty ideas behind a marriage ceremony are presented here in a simple manner that is appealing to the modern mind, and if the rites are performed accordingly, they could once again make the marriage ceremony an auspicious and holy event. The price is a bit high; if lowered, the booklet may become popular.

*Dr. Chetana Mandavia
Gujarat*

**TRIBUTES TO SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
AFTER A HUNDRED YEARS (1893–1993), Vol-
ume 3; Souvenir; publ. Ramakrishna Mission
Ashrama, Patna, Bihar 800 004; 1995; pp. 111;
Rs.15/-.**

This is the third volume in the series of annual Souvenirs published by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Patna, to commemorate the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's *Bharat Parikrama* and

his participation in the 1893 Chicago Parliament of Religions.

Swami Vivekananda's return to India in 1897, his last days in the West, his message to the West, message to the East, Vedanta, Divinity of Man, and Swamiji's Practical Vedanta are the themes dealt with in this volume with great clarity. The contributors are monastic members and devotees of the Hollywood and the Indian centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. All the articles are highly analytical, well-researched, lucid and instructive, and their respective themes are all well focused.

The articles provide the reader with the fresh insights to comprehend Swami Vivekananda's multi-faceted personality with its infinite dimensions and his tremendous contribution to the Western and the Eastern religious thoughts and philosophies. As mentioned rightly in the foreword to the Souvenir, a deep study of Swamiji through this souvenir will surely help sincere readers to have a glimpse of the infinite which he wanted us to realize.

The volume has been well got up. The jacket design with 100 flowers, representing 100 years—1893 to 1993, and also bearing Swamiji's photograph, is thoughtful.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia



Dr. Egbert Guernsey



Thomas W. Palmer



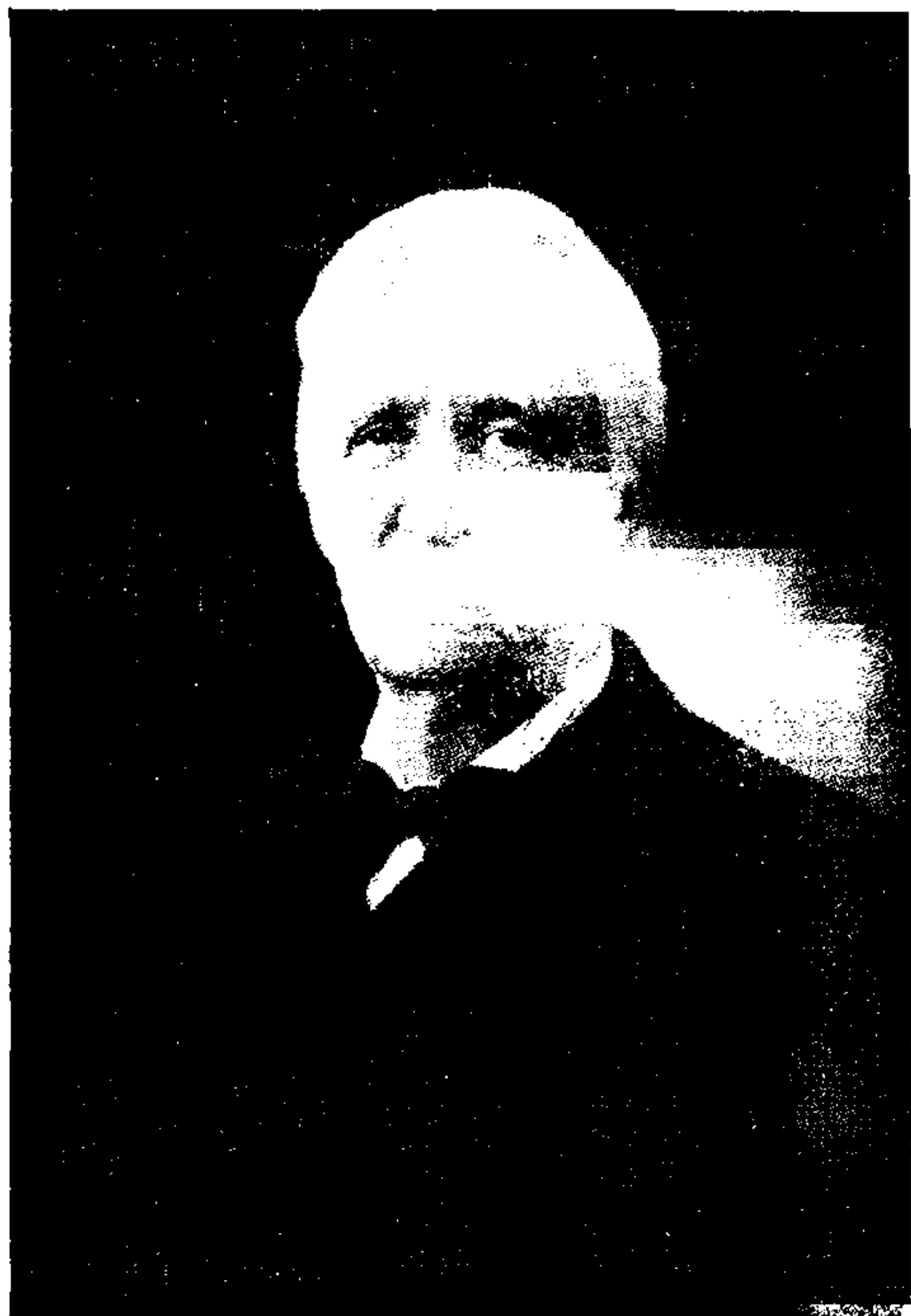
Katherine Abbot Sanborn



Sarah J. Farmer, 1897



Mrs. John B. Lyon



Mr. John B. Lyon



Emma Calvé



Ella Wheeler Wilcox, 1896



Mary Elizabeth Dutcher in later years



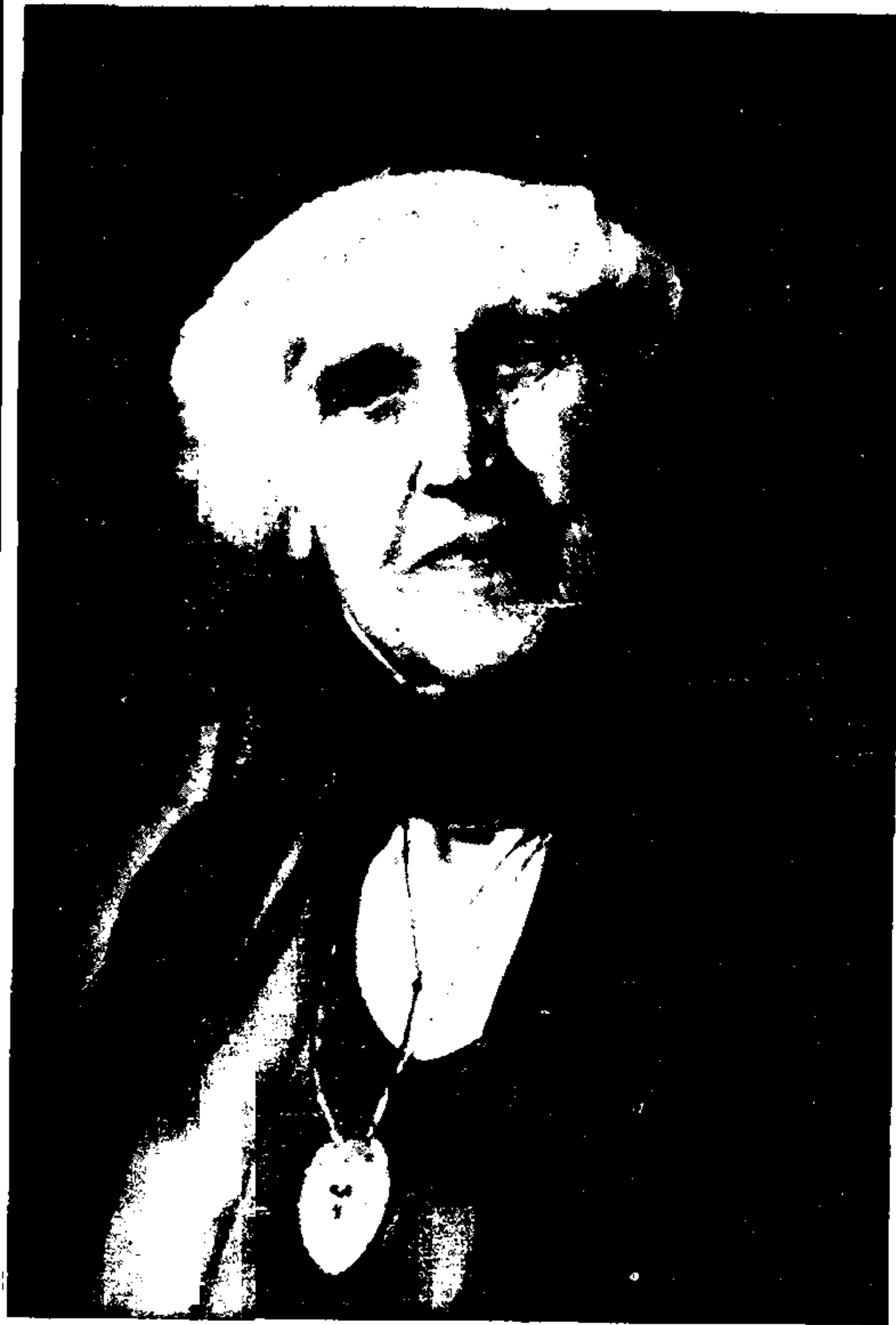
Mrs. John J. Bagley



Mr. George W. Hale



Mrs. George W. Hale



Josephine MacLeod



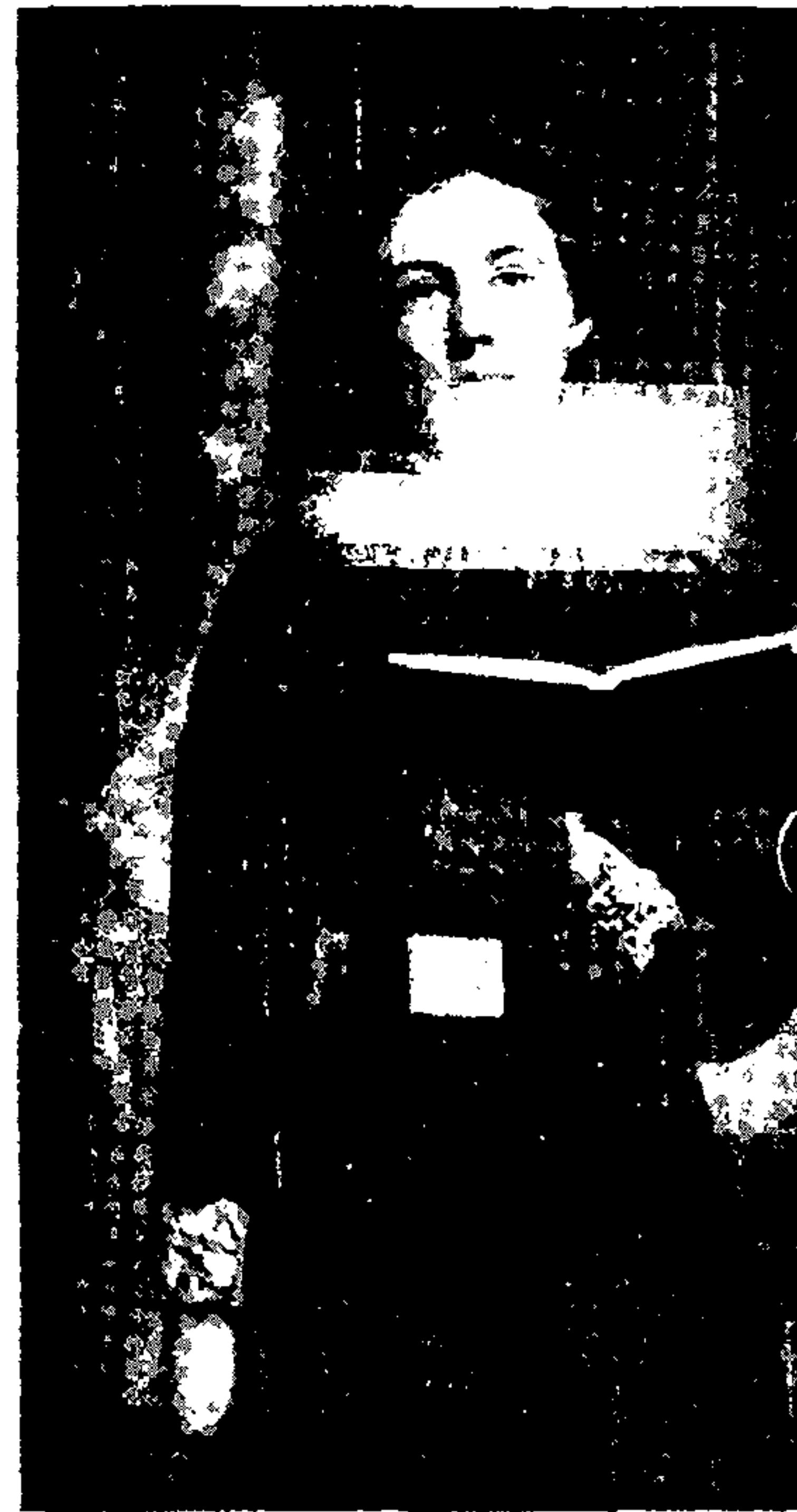
Sara Chapman Bull



Francis H. Leggett and Betty Leggett at the time of their marriage in 1895



Thomas J. Allen, Ca. 1907



Edith B. Allen, Ca. 1902



In Colombo, January 1897



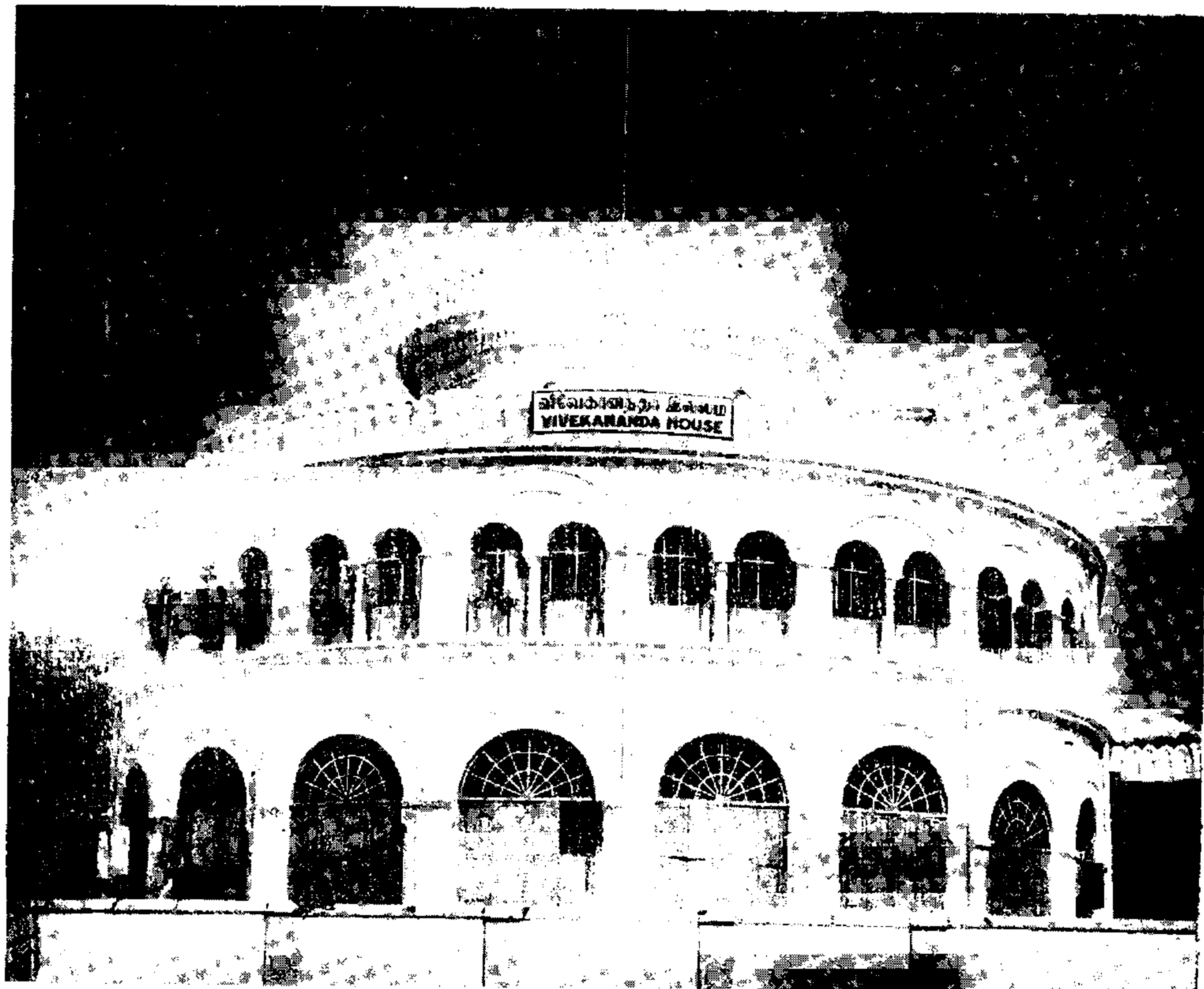
In Madras, February 1897



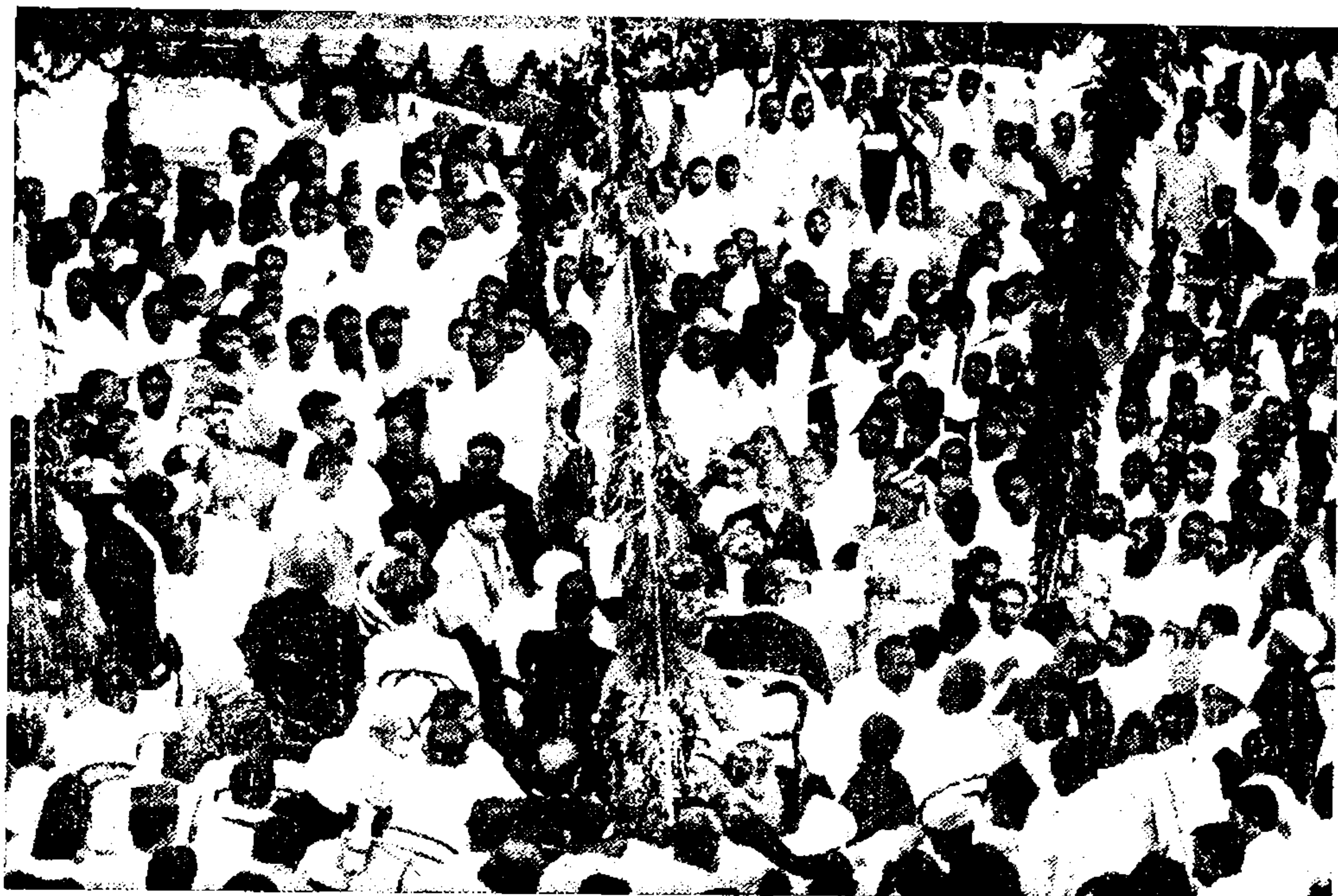
In Calcutta, February 1897



In Kashmir, July 1898



*Castle Kernan, where Swami Vivekananda stayed in Madras.
It has now been renamed 'Vivekananda House'.*



Reception in Calcutta, 28 February 1897



In Madras, February 1897—Left to right : Standing : Alasinga Perumal, J.J. Goodwin, (third) unidentified, Sitting on chairs - An unknown monk, Swamis Shivananda, Vivekananda, Niranjanananda, and Sadananda. Sitting on ground : (second) Biligiri Iyengar, (fourth) M. C. Nanjunda Rao.



*In a houseboat in Kashmir, 1898
(Left to right) : Miss MacLeod, Swami Vivekananda, Mrs. Ole Bull, Sister Nivedita*



Probably at Gopal Lal Seal's Garden House, Calcutta, February 1897



*Group at Gopal Lal Seal's house, Calcutta. Swami Vivekananda standing fifth from left
Sitting on chairs (left to right) : Alasinga Perumal, Swami Ramakrishnananda, Swami
Premananda, Mrs. J.H. Sevier, Swamis Adbhutananda, Turiyananda, G.G. Narasimhachariar*



In Kashmir, (Left to right) : Miss MacLeod, Mrs. Ole Bull, Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita



At Bosepora Lane, Calcutta 1897

Left to right : Swamis Trigunatita, Shivananda, Vivekananda, Turiyananda, and Brahmananda

Sitting on floor : Swami Sadananda



In Kashmir

Sitting on chairs (left to right) : Swamis Sadananda, Vivekananda, Niranjanananda, and Dhirananda